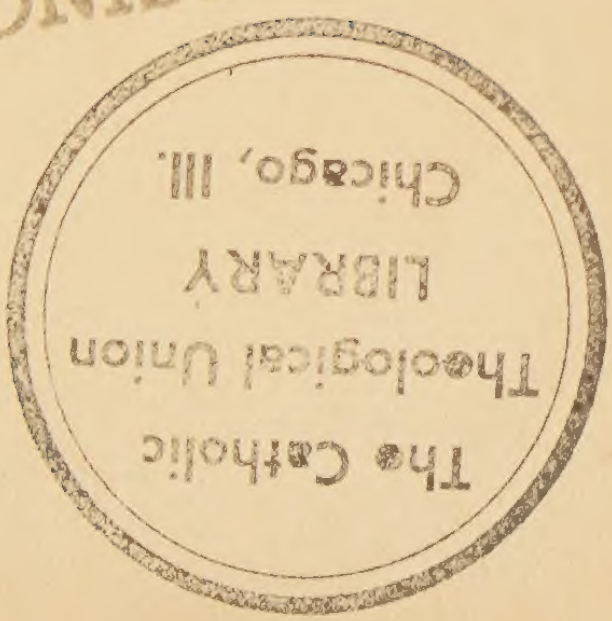
"God calls me to an austere life; I must prepare myself to follow the ways of God."

St. Benedict Joseph Labre

SEMINARY LIBRARY
PASSIONIST FATHERS



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/exercisesofstger0000thom

THE EXERCISES OF ST. GERTRUDE

The EXERCISES *of* St. GERTRUDE

VIRGIN AND ABBESS

OF THE ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT

Translated by

THOMAS ALDER POPE
M.A., of the Oratory

WITHDRAWN

LONDON
BURNS OATES AND WASHBOURNE LIMITED

Nihil Obstat.

Fr. Innocentius Apap, O.P.,

Censor Deputatus.

Imprimatur.

Edm. Can. Surmont,

Vicarius Generalis

Westmonasterii, die 23rd Januarii, 1921.

Made and Printed in Great Britain

Preface by the Right Rev. Father Dom Guéranger.

ABBOT OF SOLESMES

IN giving to the public this edition of the *Exercises of St. Gertrude*, we think that it may be useful to prefix to it a brief notice of the illustrious Saint to whom we owe this exquisite little book. It is not our intention to recount at large the operations of divine grace in that favoured soul; this we reserve for a separate work. Our object is only to send out these Exercises with an appropriate introduction, although we are well assured that we are giving pleasure to all devout souls, whose attention seems called in a remarkable way to all that concerns St. Gertrude. The success which attended the republication of the *Life and Revelations* of this great Saint has shown this; and the little volume entitled *Prayers of St. Gertrude* has gone through numberless editions. We will first give a sketch of the life and character of St. Gertrude, and then say a few words of the little work before us.

St. Gertrude was born in 1263, at Eisleben, in the county of Mansfield, in Upper Saxony. She and her sister, St. Mechtilde, were of the family of the Counts of Lachenborn. When she was five years old she was placed in the Benedictine abbey of Rodersdorf, in the diocese of Halberstadt, and her sister Mechtilde followed her soon after. In that holy

retreat Gertrude flourished like a heavenly plant, and her soul seemed to be adorned with all the gifts of nature and of grace. The monasteries of nuns in the Middle Ages were often schools of science; in that of Rodersdorf St. Gertrude was instructed not only in sacred learning, but in what were then called the liberal arts; and she made such progress in her studies, that her learning was matter of astonishment to the most renowned doctors. Being endowed with a natural and persuasive eloquence, the effect of which was aided by her saintly life, she drew all hearts towards her, and her sweetness and humility gave her an irresistible influence.

When she had reached her twenty-sixth year it pleased the Saviour of men to manifest himself sensibly to her, and to begin that series of ineffable communications which thenceforward were her whole life. A holy soul, to whom the Lord specially revealed himself from time to time, was assured by him that, after the divine Sacrament of the Altar, there was no earthly resting-place he loved so much as the heart of Gertrude. To another he gave this assurance, that whoever desired to enjoy his presence would always find him in that heart in which he loved to dwell. And yet a third person, who had ventured to ask how St. Gertrude had merited to be thus preferred, received for answer these words: "I love her thus because of the holy liberty of her heart, into which nothing can enter to dispute my sway."

The sisters of the monastery of Rodersdorf knew well the value of the treasure they possessed, and elected her abbess in 1294; and the servant of God exercised this maternal office for forty years. Circumstances into which we need not now enter removed Gertrude and her community, a year after her election, to the abbey of Heldelfs, where she spent the remainder of her life. Her sister Mechtilde followed her thither; and her simplicity of heart was rewarded by our Lord with favours which we may almost compare with those which he lavished on Gertrude herself. God withdrew Mechtilde from the world before her illustrious sister, who lived until 1334.

The marvels which marked the life of Gertrude may be all referred to the unreserved familiarity with which it pleased the Son of God to converse with her—a familiarity so touching and so uninterrupted, that the pious Louis of Blois says it may give us some idea of the communications of the Saviour to his Blessed Mother. When we read the five books of her *Insinuations of the Divine Goodness*, we begin to understand how dear a soul may be to God, and how it may respond to his loving advances.

The fidelity of Gertrude merited for her many sublime favours, some of which we will mention. Once, when she was pouring out her whole heart in love to its divine Spouse, it received the impression of the five wounds of the divine Redeemer; and Gertrude felt them continually to the moment of her death,

with an ever-increasing anguish and love. On another occasion, on the Feast of the Annunciation, the Mother of God fastened on her breast a heavenly jewel, wherein were seven precious stones, which expressed by their symbolical colours the seven principal virtues which had drawn down upon the lowly virgin the complacency of the heavenly Spouse. Again, on the Feast of the Ascension, while she was gazing on the crucifix with loving emotion, a ray was darted from the holy image swift as an arrow, and pierced her heart through and through. Christmas Day was to her more than once marked by wonderful graces. Once she received in her heart the divine Infant, who sprang from his crib to attach himself to her. Another time the Blessed Mother condescended to lay him in her arms. One day, on the Purification of our Lady, when her whole being was, as it were, melted in an ecstacy of love, our Lord impressed himself upon her as a divine seal, which could never be obliterated. And on very many other occasions the Son of God deigned to disclose to Gertrude his ineffable beauty, to ravish her heart with his divine caress, to make her feel the constant care with which he adorned and embellished her soul, and to teach her how she should think and speak and act, to be always pleasing in his sight.

But the especial characteristic of the piety of St. Gertrude towards the incarnate Word is her devotion to the sacred Heart of Jesus. The mystery of mercy and of love contained

in that divine Heart had been disclosed to her by the Son of God himself, some centuries before it became an object of special devotion to the Church at large. St. Mechtilde shared with her sister this glorious privilege; and the Heart of Jesus had already been long an object of adoration and love to the sons and daughters of St. Benedict, when, in the seventeenth century, it pleased God to claim for it, by the instrumentality of the venerable sister Margaret Mary, and of the Order of the Visitation, that more solemn worship with which it is now surrounded.

Every thing concurred to draw St. Gertrude towards that adorable centre and source of the divine love; and, moreover, our Lord himself continually excited her to this devotion. Again and again he presented to her view his sacred Heart, in token of the intimate union which he willed to maintain with her; and he even vouchsafed, in one ineffable revelation, to exchange it for that of the holy virgin, who thus felt her divine Spouse live and love within her. At the moment when Gertrude was about to expire and to rejoin the supreme object of her love, Jesus appeared to her, visible even to some of the pious nuns who were about the deathbed of their mother; and when the last moment came, they saw her soul spring towards the God-man and disappear in his bosom, and thus borne up to heaven.

The love of Gertrude towards Mary was in proportion to the tenderness with which the

Mother of God regarded the dearest of the spouses of her Son. Our Lord revealed to her in many sublime visions the grandeur of her of whom he condescended to take our flesh; Mary herself more than once condescended to associate the humble virgin with her in the joys of her divine maternity. Gertrude has bequeathed to us the expression of her devotion to the glorious Queen of Heaven, in that exquisite prayer which so expressively reveals the deep and touching character of her piety, "Hail, fair Lily of the effulgent and ever-glorious Trinity. Hail, radiant Rose of heavenly fragrance, of whom the King of heaven willed to be born, and with thy milk to be fed; feed our souls with thy divine insinuations."

The religious honour of the saints was dear to the heart of Gertrude; but she felt a peculiar predilection for some of these friends of God. A special attraction drew her towards St. John the Evangelist, to whom the goodness of our Lord to her gave her so striking a resemblance. The great patriarch St. Benedict was honoured by her with the most filial tenderness, and he rewarded her piety with marks of true paternal affection. He chose her to reveal to the faithful the promise he had made to give special aid, at the hour of their death, to all those who during their life should have rejoiced with him in the graces which attended his blessed death. St. Gregory the Great, St. Augustine, and St. Bernard, were peculiarly dear to the devotion of Gertrude; and, amongst

the saints of her own sex, she loved with a love of preference St. Agnes, the tender spouse of the divine Lamb; St. Catherine, the noble and eloquent teacher of Alexandria; the virgin-martyr St. Margaret, whom the crusades had rendered so dear to all the Middle Ages; and St. Mary Magdalen, who so loved the divine Redeemer, and who was at once the pattern and the encouragement of Gertrude.

Her life, thus crowded with wonders, was rendered more beautiful still by the ineffable halo of simplicity which crowned it. Her profound knowledge of the mercies of which the Heart of Jesus is the centre and the source caused her own heart to overflow with love to sinners. The conversion of sinners was her great anxiety, and seemed, in many instances, to be affected at her will. A tender devotion to the souls in Purgatory was also a characteristic mark of the piety of Gertrude; and our Lord often condescended to give her proof how pleasing to him was her charity towards those who could no longer do anything for themselves.

The gift of miracles set the seal of perfection on this life so full of grace; nor will it appear wonderful that the prayers of Gertrude obtained everything from him who loved her so much, and whose love she so fully returned. And yet it was his will to test her patience with long and most painful illnesses, in order to her more complete purification; but he found that she who in time of health chastised her body, and strove to enter more and more into the

sorrows of her heavenly Spouse, was always disposed to welcome suffering with thankfulness and joy.

Such was Gertrude; and yet earth would have preserved no memory that it had ever possessed such a treasure, if the divine goodness had not taken care to reveal it to men, lest so glorious a triumph of his grace should remain unknown. Our Lord condescended to command the humble virgin to write out an account of the divine favours he had bestowed on her; and nothing but a direct command from him could have overcome her supreme desire to glorify God, and be useful to men in this world, without leaving in the memory of men any trace of her passage.

To the obedience of Gertrude we owe the five books which she wrote in German, but which are better known in the Latin translation of the pious Lanspergius. They bear the touching and expressive title, *Insinuationes Divinæ Pietatis;* and from them we may learn to what depth of condescension the divine goodness can stoop, and what ineffable tenderness of love the Creator can lavish upon his faithful creatures. Of these the second book alone was written by Gertrude; and it is enough to enable us to enter into the interior dispositions of her privileged soul. The first, third, and fourth books were compiled by the nuns of Heldelfs from papers which the Saint had written in obedience to the command of God. The fifth contains some interesting notices of her last illness and

death, and of several events in which the monastery was much interested.

The numberless conversations of the Saint with her Saviour, the light which he bestowed upon her, the direction which he gave her, the wonders that took place in this transcendent communion, the language of Gertrude herself —all concur to render this book one of the most precious illustrations of the power of divine grace in the soul of man, as well as one of the most affecting and instructive of human compositions. No doubt there are many defects of arrangement and method in the several narratives; but still all who have read them with attention bear testimony that no book has ever so enlightened and touched them.

The list of the devoted admirers of these writings would be long and imposing. We might place at its head the name of the seraphic St. Teresa, who, we are told by Father Ribera, her confessor, had taken St. Gertrude as her mistress and guide. Louis of Blois speaks of her, in his *Monile Spirituale*, in terms of rapturous enthusiasm. Lanspergius, as we have already seen, translated the documents which contain the revelations and teachings of the Saint into Latin. St. Francis of Sales never speaks of her but with devout admiration. Cornelius à Lapide, in his commentaries on the holy Scriptures, calls her a consummate mistress of the meaning of the Holy Spirit. It would be easy to carry on this list through several pages; we will close it with the judgment

of the holy and wise M. Olier, as we find it in his unpublished works: "St. Gertrude," says that man of God, "by reason of her simplicity and profound humility, induced our Lord to treat her in a manner altogether singular, and to enrich her with his best gifts. Her writings tend always to unite the soul to Jesus Christ, and differ in this respect from many works of contemplation, which rather withdraw the soul from its application to the Holy Humanity of our Lord."

It would not be easy, we think, to produce higher or more abundant evidence in favour of any book; nor could the character of the spirituality of St. Gertrude be recognised and attested by judges more competent. But there is an authority far higher still—that of the Church itself. That mother of the faithful, ever guided by the Holy Ghost, has in her holy liturgy set her seal upon St. Gertrude. The Saint herself, and the spirit which animated her, are there for ever recommended and glorified in the eyes of all Christians, in virtue of the solemn judgment contained in the office of her festival.

It has been our wish to make St. Gertrude better known, or at least to remind the reader what she was while on earth, before we speak of the sublime devotions contained in this little volume. We have been so long separated in France from so many marvels of piety which were the joy of our ancestors, that whenever we regain possession of one of them it is never unreasonable to say a few words about its

history. Having discharged this duty, we may now speak of the *Exercises of St. Gertrude*. They are seven in number, and were drawn up by the Saint for the use of the sisters of her monastery, and they embrace the whole work of the sanctification of a soul. The starting-point is the renewal of the grace of baptism, and preparation for death is their end. Between these two we find Exercises which point out the way to correspond to the vocation to a religious life, acts of love towards God, and the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving due to the divine majesty.

Such is the plan of St. Gertrude; but the attempt to describe the beauty of these exquisite devotions would but weaken its impression. The eloquence, the unction, the glow of divine love, which pervade them, attest the power of divine grace to teach a mortal the language of heaven. The first feeling of the reader is one of wonder; then, little by little, he grows accustomed to the speech of a higher land, which is, after all, his own true country and home. The soul then fully acknowledges all that it owes to its Creator and Redeemer. It resolves to follow the steps of the inspired Saint whose words of fire have fixed its attention and purified its aspirations. It feels that its one work on earth is to glorify him who has not only poured such rich treasures of love into the soul of St. Gertrude, but has likewise called every creature whom he has redeemed to live in him and for him.

The pious and learned Father Faber has brought out, with his characteristic sagacity, the advantages of that form of spirituality which gives the soul breadth and liberty, and so produces in many persons effects which some modern methods fail of producing: "No one," says he, "can be at all acquainted with the old-fashioned Benedictine school of spiritual writers, without perceiving and admiring the beautiful liberty of spirit which pervades and possesses their whole mind. It is just what we should expect from an order of such matured traditions. St. Gertrude is a fair specimen of them. She is thoroughly Benedictine. . . . A spirit of breadth, a spirit of liberty, that is the Catholic spirit; and it was eminently the badge of the old Benedictine ascetics. Modern writers for the most part have tightened things, and have lost by it instead of gaining. By frightening people, they have lessened devotion in extent; and by overstraining it, they have lowered it in degree."[1]

The school of which Father Faber speaks, and which is founded upon the rule of the great Patriarch of the Monks of the West, begins with St. Gregory the Great and ends with Louis of Blois. Such was the independent action of the Holy Spirit who guided it, that in it women have prophesied as well as men. It is enough to mention St. Hildegarde and St. Gertrude, with whom we may fitly associate St. Mechtilde and St. Frances

[1] All for Jesus, ch. viii.

of Rome. Any one who has tried modern methods will find, on making acquaintance with these ancient writers, that he is breathing another atmosphere, and is urged onward by a gentle authority which is never felt, but which allows no rest. He will not find that subtlety, that keen and learned analysis, he has met with elsewhere, and which rather weary than aid the soul.

In any case, there are many ways, and every way is good which brings men back to God by a thorough conversion of heart. But we are sure that those who may be led to commit themselves to the guidance of a saint of the old school will not lose their time; and that if they meet with less philosophy and less psychology on their way, they will be subdued by the simplicity and authority of her language, and be moved and melted as they contrast their own souls with that of their saintly guide. And this blessed revolution will take place in almost every soul that follows St. Gertrude in the week of Exercises she proposes to them, if only they really desire to draw yet more closely the ties which unite them to God, if their intention be fixed aright, and their souls truly recollected in God. We may almost venture to assure such persons that they will come forth from these Exercises transformed in their whole being. They will return to them again and again with ever-increasing pleasure; for they will have no discouraging memory of fatigue, or of the

slightest constraint laid upon their liberty of spirit. They will feel confounded, indeed, to be admitted so near the inmost heart of so great a saint; but they will also feel that they have been created for the same end as that saint, and that they must bestir themselves, and quit all easy, dangerous ways, which lead to perdition.

And if we be asked whence comes that wonderful influence which our Saint exercises over all who listen to her, our answer would be: from her surpassing holiness. She does not prove the possibility of spiritual movement and advance; she moves and advances. A blessed soul, sent down from heaven to dwell awhile with men, and speaking the language of the heavenly country in this land of exile, would doubtless utterly transform those who heard its speech. Now St. Gertrude was admitted to such familiar converse with the Son of God, that her words have just the accent of such a soul; and this is why they have been and are like winged arrows, which pierce and wound all within their range. The understanding is enlarged and enlightened by her pure and elevated doctrine, and yet St. Gertrude never lectures or preaches; the heart is touched and melted, and yet St. Gertrude speaks only to God; the soul judges itself, condemns itself, renews itself by compunction, and yet St. Gertrude has made no effort to move or convict it.

And if we ask what is the source of the special blessing attached to the language of

St. Gertrude, the answer is, that it blesses because it is so impregnated with the divine Word, not only with the revelations which St. Gertrude received from her heavenly Spouse, but with the sacred Scriptures and the liturgy of the Church. This holy daughter of the cloister drank in light and life day by day from the sources of all true contemplation, from the very fountain of living waters which gushes forth from the psalms and the inspired words of the divine office. Her every sentence shows how exclusively her soul was nourished with this heavenly food. She so lived into the liturgy of the Church that we continually find in her revelations that the Saviour discloses to her the mysteries of heaven, and the Mother of God and the saints hold converse with her on some Antiphon, or Response, or Introit, which the Saint is singing with delight, and of which she is striving to feel all the force and the sweetness.

Hence that unceasing flow of unaffected poetry which seems to have become quite natural to her, and that hallowed enthusiasm which raises the literary beauty of her writings almost to the height of mystical inspiration. This child of the thirteenth century, buried in a monastery of Suabia, preceded Dante in the paths of spiritual poetry. Sometimes her soul breaks forth into tender and touching elegy; sometimes the fire which consumes her bursts forth in transports of fervour; sometimes her feelings clothe themselves quite instinctively in a dramatic form; sometimes

she stops short in her sublimest flights, and she who almost rivals the seraphim descends to earth, but only to prepare herself for a still higher flight. It is as though there had been an unending struggle between the humility which held her prostrate in the dust and the aspirations of her soul, panting after Jesus, who was drawing her, and who had lavished on her such exceeding love.

In our opinion the writings of St. Gertrude lose nothing of their indescribable beauty, even when placed beside those of St. Teresa. Nay, we think that the saint of Germany is not unfrequently superior to her sister of Spain. The latter, full of impetuous ardour, has not, it is true, the tinge of pensive melancholy which colours the writings of the former; but St. Gertrude knew Latin so well, and was so profoundly versed in the letter and the spirit of the holy Scriptures, that we do not hesitate to pronounce her style superior in richness and in force to that of St. Teresa.

Still we pray the reader not to be frightened at the thought of being placed under the guidance of a seraph, when his conscience tells him that he has still so much to do in the purgative way, before he can venture to enter upon paths which may never open to him on earth. Let him simply listen to St. Gertrude, let him fix his eye upon her, and have faith in the end she proposes to him. When the holy Church puts in our mouths the language of the Psalms, she knows full well that that language is often far beyond the feelings of

our soul; but if we wish to bring ourselves up to the level of these divine hymns, our best method is certainly to repeat them frequently in faith and humility, and await the transformation they will assuredly effect. St. Gertrude detaches us gently from ourselves, and brings us to Jesus by going before us herself, and by drawing us after her, though at a great distance. She goes straight to the heart of her divine Spouse, and she might well do so; but will it not be an inestimable blessing if she bring us to his feet like Magdalen, penitent and transformed by love?

In any case, let her gently teach us the lessons of her first Exercise—that we are Christians; and let us go with her through the profound and magnificent ceremonies with which the mystery of the divine adoption was effected in us. The three Exercises which follow lead us within the cloister, for St. Gertrude wrote for her sisters alone; but let us not suppose that these exquisite pages are useless to those of us who are living in the midst of the world. The religious life, when expounded by such an interpreter, is a spectacle as instructive as it is striking. Need we say that the practice of the precepts of the Gospel becomes more easy to those who have well pondered and admired the practice of its counsels? What is the *Imitation of Christ* but a book written by a monk for the use of monks; and yet who is not familiar with its teaching? How many seculars delight in the writings of St. Teresa;

and yet the holy Carmelitess makes the religious life the one theme of her teaching.

When once this first step has been taken, every Christian may follow the steps of St. Gertrude; for in the remaining Exercises she treats of the duty of every human being towards God. We will not now speak of her wonderful style of expression. We are so unused to the decided and elevated language of the ages of faith, that some readers, accustomed to modern books alone, may be startled, and even pained, by St. Gertrude. But what is the remedy for this inconvenience? If we have unlearned the language of that antique piety which fashioned saints, surely our best way is to learn it again as soon as we can; and St. Gertrude will give us wonderful help in doing so. The reader must prepare himself to meet with metaphors, with allusions, with expressions, which our ignorance of the Bible may lead us to regard as strange and far fetched.

Some persons may even be scandalised with the passionate language in which St. Gertrude pours out her soul before the Saviour of men. Nowadays it is not a rare thing to meet with certain decisions on matters of Catholic taste and propriety, expressed so plausibly and with so much confidence, as to command a too ready and too general acceptance. Sometimes these teachers give forth their oracular judgment on the facts of the supernatural order, and they are fond of remarking that, in mystic writers, divine love

often borrows the language of profane love. It seems to us that a moment's reflection, and a slight acquaintance with the spiritual life, might have led these writers to ask whether it may not be that human love has, on the contrary, borrowed its glowing language from love divine. God, who inspires all holy and pure affections, has willed to be thus loved by his creatures. In the Old Testament and in the New he has himself condescended to call himself the Bridegroom and Spouse of the soul; and is it so surprising that the soul should believe his word and act upon it? that the heart, wounded and pierced with love of his infinite beauty, should exhaust the utmost tenderness that heart of man can feel or tongue of man utter? But the true Christian sense is so weak in these our days, and so many persons allow themselves to be misled by the confident assertions of pretenders to learning, that we have felt it our duty to anticipate possible surprise, and to calm possible doubts.

The editions of the *Exercises of St. Gertrude* are far less numerous than those of her *Insinuations of Divine Piety;* and indeed they can hardly be said to be known in modern times. Two very faulty and imperfect translations appeared in France in the seventeenth century, but both are extremely rare, and neither of them gives a true notion of the original book. Dom Mège, who published in 1664 a translation of the *Insinuations*, reprinted at Avignon in 1842, omitted the

Exercises altogether, so that they were as though they did not exist. May our feeble translation contribute to make them known and loved; may their publication increase the glory of St. Gertrude, and obtain for us the graces promised by the Son of God to all who should honour this his spouse of predilection !

Those who appreciate the revelations of our Saint will hear in her *Exercises* the accents of the voice they have learned to love, and will join with us in repeating the eloquent words of Father Faber: " Such was the Saint, the special Saint of praise and of devout desires ! Oh, that she could be in the Church once more, as she was in ages past, the doctress and the prophetess of the interior life, like Debora, who sat beneath her palm in Mount Ephraim, uttering her canticles and judging Israel."[1]

[1] All for Jesus ch. viii.

Contents

	PAGE
Preface	v
First Exercise: Renewal of Baptismal Innocence	1
Second Exercise: Spiritual Conversion .	17
Third Exercise: Espousals and Consecration	27
Fourth Exercise: Renewal of Religious Profession	53
Fifth Exercise: Acts of Love to God .	81
Sixth Exercise: Praise and Thanksgiving .	109
Seventh Exercise: Reparation, and Preparation for Death	153
Hymn to St. Gertrude	190

Exercises of St. Gertrude

FIRST EXERCISE

RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL INNOCENCE

THIS Exercise is the starting-point of the whole work of St. Gertrude. The end which the illustrious Abbess proposes to herself is, as we have said, to assist the soul which has placed itself under her care, up to the moment when it is freed from the trammels of the body, and stands before God, its Judge and its great Reward.

The first need of the soul in this progress towards its last end is that sanctifying grace which was communicated to it by Baptism; and therefore St. Gertrude brings it back, in the first place, to that baptismal font wherein it was regenerated, and whence it drew a divine life. She brings before it the several circumstances which accompanied this divine adoption; and she suggests the acts which should be called forth by the review of the several rites wherewith the Holy Church surrounds the sacramental action itself with such magnificence and such depth of meaning.

How many are there of the faithful who, for want of a due comprehension of these sublime ceremonies, retain only a vague recollection of them, and bestow on them a slight and distracted attention! By using the acts which St. Gertrude here clothes for them with words, they may repair this unhappy forgetfulness,

and will revive within them the grace of that august Sacrament of Christian initiation, to which they owe all their rights in the order of salvation, and all the supernatural gifts which are unceasingly flowing down upon them—gifts to which God will add the crown and consummation in the other life, by the manifestation of his sovereign beauty.

FIRST EXERCISE

The Renewal of Baptismal Innocence

If you wish to present to the Lord, at the close of your life, the robe of baptismal innocence without stain, and the seal of the Christian faith whole and unbroken, set apart some time in each year for dwelling on the memory of your Baptism; and let it be, if possible, about Easter or Pentecost. To perform this Exercise aright, you will excite in yourself an earnest desire to be born again unto God by the holiness of a renewed life, and to enter again into a restored infancy. And you will say:

GOD be merciful unto me and bless me; may he lift up the light of his countenance on me, and have mercy on me. Let my heart praise him in sincerity and truth; let the whole earth of my heart tremble and be moved before the presence of the Lord; may my spirit be recreated and renewed by the Spirit of his mouth; and may that good Spirit bring me forth into the land wherein reigneth justice.

Then repeat the Creed; beseeching the Lord to enable you perfectly and entirely to renounce Satan, and to uphold you in a right, living, and entire faith to the latest moment of your life.

O LORD God, who art full of mercy and of truth, my Creator and my Redeemer. who hast caused to shine on me the sacred

light of thy countenance; who hast redeemed me with the precious Blood of thine only Son, and hast regenerated me by Baptism and by the power of thy Holy Spirit, into hope of everlasting life; enable me, with a sincere heart and in all truth, to renounce the devil, his pomps and his works. Enable me to believe firmly in thee, with a right and fervent faith, having in it the life and the root of good works. Make me to believe in thee, my God and my Creator, through Jesus Christ thy Son, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and by the mighty working of the Holy Ghost. Grant me to cling to thee, and evermore to abide unchangingly in thee, even to the end. Amen.

In memory of the sign of faith which was first of all impressed on you, say :

O HOLY Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by thy divine and almighty power direct and strengthen my faith; by thy divine wisdom condescend to instruct it and enlighten it; by thy divine goodness vouchsafe to sustain and to perfect it, that at the hour of my death I may be enabled to present it before thee pure and entire, together with the practice and discharge of all virtues. Amen.

In union with the exorcism which was performed in your regard, beseech the Lord that he would deign to enable you, by the might of his Name, to detect and to overcome all the wiles of the devil ; so that the enemy may never glory in

having prevailed against you, but that in every temptation he may retreat baffled and confounded at being repulsed at the very onset.

O LORD Jesus Christ, thou great High-Priest, who by thy precious death hast restored me to life, vouchsafe to breathe on me in the virtue of thy Spirit, and to scatter all the ambushes of the enemy by the efficacious might of thy presence. Break within me all the bonds of Satan; and in thy mercy remove far from me all blindness of heart. Let thy perfect love, O Christ, be to me an assured triumph in every temptation. Let thy sacred humility teach me to avoid all the snares of the enemy. Let thy clear-shining truth be my guide, and enable me to walk before thee with a sincere and upright heart. Finally may the blessing of thy most indulgent mercy ever prevent me, follow me, and keep me, even to the end of my life. Amen.

You will then make on yourself the sign of the cross, which was made on your forehead and on your breast, saying :

IN the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. O sweetest Jesus, my crucified Love, deign thyself to impress the sign of thy cross on my forehead and on my heart, that I may live for ever beneath thy protection. Bestow on me a living faith, that I may fulfil thy heavenly precepts ; enlarge my heart, that I may run in the way of thy

commandments; and render me meet to become the temple of God and the abode of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Here implore the Lord Jesus, who is the great High-Priest, to lay on you his hand, that thus you may dwell for ever beneath the shadow of the Most High, and abide under the protection of the God of heaven.

O JESUS, full of love, protect me beneath the shadow of thy hand, and let thy right hand uphold and sustain me. Open to me the doors of thy loving mercy; impress on me the seal of thy wisdom; withdraw me, by the clear shining of thy truth, from all earthly desires; gladden my soul with the sweet fragrance of thy commandments, and enable me to advance in virtue day by day. Amen.

In order to obtain from the Lord the Angel who may be your guide throughout the voyage of life, say :

O JESUS, Prince of Peace, Angel of the great counsel, be ever at my right hand as my leader and my guardian throughout my pilgrimage, that I be not shaken or moved, nor wander far from thee. Vouchsafe to send from heaven thy holy Angel to take charge of me as the minister of thy loving care concerning me, to lead me onwards according to thy good pleasure, to help me to walk in thy ways, and to bring me at length to thee, perfect and complete. Amen.

Welcome the holy Angel, and greet him saying :

HAIL, holy Angel of God, guardian of my soul and of my body. By the sweetest Heart of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, take me beneath the shelter of thy faithful and fatherly care, for the love of him whose creature thou art even as I myself, and who put me under thy charge on the day of my Baptism. Help me to cross, unharmed and unsullied, the swollen torrent of this life, until I be admitted to behold, like thee and with thee, that ravishing Face, that beauty of the supreme King, the sight of which infinitely transcends the highest bliss our hearts can conceive. Amen.

Here pray that your mouth may be filled with the salt of wisdom, that through the Holy Ghost the savour of the faith may ever be sweet to your taste.

O SWEETEST Jesus, bestow on me, in thy goodness, the salt of wisdom and the spirit of understanding, unto life everlasting. Amen. Enable me to taste the sweetness of thy Spirit; make me to hunger after thy will; give me to know thy good pleasure, that my service may ever be acceptable unto thee. Amen.

Make the sign of the cross on your ears and on your nostrils, beseeching our Lord to open himself the ears of your heart to hear his law, and to

shed throughout your whole being the sweet fragrance of his knowledge.

O JESUS, my tender and loving Shepherd, grant that I, thine unworthy sheep, may always know and follow evermore thy sweetest voice. Grant that, drawn by the sweet fragrance of a living faith, I may bend my steps towards the pastures of everlasting life, wherein I may rest for ever, and for ever behold, O loving Master, the wonders of thy surpassing sweetness.

Take in your hand the cross as a banner of salvation, that you may be conqueror in all your struggles with the enemy, and say :

O JESUS, full of love, place the sign of thy holy cross in my right hand, that ever armed therewith, and encompassed by thy protection, I may boldly advance against all the ambushes of the enemy. Amen. May the allmightiness of God the Father bless me ! May the wisdom of the Son bless me ! May the most compassionate charity of the Holy Ghost bless me, and keep me unto everlasting life ! Amen.

You will next turn to the Virgin Mother, that she may obtain for you the complete renewal of your life. You will beseech her, who is the rose worthy of all admiration, to be so your mother that you may become her true daughter by your conduct. You will implore that pearl most pure to cover your soul with the mantle of her chastity, and to preserve you, by the virtue

of her sweetest countenance, pure and without spot for her Son, your Lord and King. Beseech her to cause your name to be written amongst those who have obtained the better part in Israel; and that your inheritance may be with those who walk in innocency of heart, and set the Lord before them as their one and only End throughout the whole course of their lives.

HAIL, Mary, Queen of Compassion, through whom the life-giving remedy hath come unto us; Virgin and Mother of the Divine Infant, thou, by whom hath come unto us the Son of the everlasting Light, he who sheds his perfumes over Israel. In thy Son thou art become the true Mother of all those of whom this one only Son of thy womb hath not abhorred to become the brother. Wherefore I beseech thee, by his love, receive me, all unworthy as I am, into thy maternal arms. Aid and sustain my faith, preserve and enlighten it; be within me a principle of renewal and of fidelity, thou who art my only and most loving Mother. May I be encompassed during this mortal life with thy tender and most compassionate care; and do thou receive me into thy maternal bosom at the hour of my death. Amen.

In memory of the holy chrism, make the sign of the cross on your breast and between your shoulders, saying:

GRANT me, O my Jesus, ever to bear on my shoulders, for love of thy love, the yoke so easy and the burden so light of thy

commandments; and to preserve lovingly on my breast the mystery of thy sacred faith as a bundle of myrrh, so that thou mayest ever be to me the Crucified, fixed for evermore in my heart. Amen.

Reflecting on the name which was then given to you, say :

O SWEETEST Jesus, write my name beneath thine own in the book of life. Say to my soul, " Thou art mine; I am thy salvation. I have known thee and acknowledged thee; thou shalt no more call thyself *the forsaken,* but thy name shall be *my delight is in her,* and thine inheritance shall be with me in the land of the living."

Represent to yourself the moment in which you were plunged into the sacred font, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

O JESUS, Fountain of life, give me to drink of that living water which gushes forth from thee, that, having tasted of thee, I may thirst evermore after thee alone. Plunge me all into the depths of thy loving mercy. Baptise me into the holiness of thy precious death. Renew me in that blood wherewith thou hast redeemed me. Wash out, in the water which flowed from thy most holy side, all the stains wherewith I have defiled my baptismal innocency. Fill me with thy Spirit, and take entire possession of me in purity of soul and of body. Amen.

Recall to mind the holy chrism wherewith you were anointed on coming forth from the water, and ask our Lord that the unction of his Spirit may teach you all things.

O HOLY Father, who, through thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ, hast regenerated me with water and the Holy Ghost, grant me this day perfect and entire remission of all my sins, and vouchsafe to seal me with the anointing of thy Spirit unto everlasting life. Amen. May thy peace be with me evermore. Amen.

Say in memory of the white robe wherein you were clothed :

O JESUS, Sun of Justice, clothe me with thyself, that I may be enabled to live according to thee. Enable me henceforward to keep the robe of my baptismal innocence in all its whiteness and in its unsullied holiness, so that I may present it at thy judgment-seat without spot, and be arrayed therewith in life everlasting. Amen.

Think of the taper which was put into your hand, and pray for interior light :

O JESUS, thou unfailing Light, kindle within me evermore the glowing lamp of thy love, and teach me how to keep my baptism pure and without reproach, that I may appear with humble confidence when I am summoned to thy divine espousals, and

be accounted worthy to enter into the joys of the life that never ends, and see thee, O thou true Light, and gaze upon the beauty of thy divine countenance. Amen.

Recalling to mind the communion thou didst receive of the life-giving Body and Blood of the Lamb without spot, say :

O JESUS Christ my Lord, may thine adorable Body and thy precious Blood preserve my body and my soul unto everlasting life. Amen. May thy peace be with me! O Jesus, thou true Peace, may I have evermore abounding peace in thee; so that through thee I may attain to that peace which passeth all understanding, amidst which I shall behold thee in everlasting gladness. Amen.

In this communion, pray that your life may be entirely hidden with Jesus Christ in God, that at the hour of your death you may be found complete in him.

O JESUS, full of love, thou sweetest guest of my soul, may thine exquisite and ravishing union with me be to me to-day the remission of all my sins, the satisfaction for all my negligences, and my return to the life I had lost. May it be my everlasting salvation, the healing of my soul and of my body, the enlargement of my love, my renewal in virtue, and the establishment of my life in thee for evermore.

May this thy coming unto me work in me a perfect liberty of spirit, the cleansing of my whole life, and a noble generosity in all good works; may it be to me the shield of my patience, the triumph of humility, the stay of confidence, my consolation in sadness, and an effectual aid towards final perseverance. May it be to me the armour of faith, the firmness of hope, the perfection of charity, the accomplishment of thy commandments, the renewal of my mind, my entire sanctification in thy truth, and the crown and consummation of my life in a perfect dedication to thee.

May it be within me the source of all virtues, the end of all sin, the increase of all good, and the everlasting covenant of thy love; so that my body alone may linger in this place of exile, and the whole energy of my soul be there where thou art, my heritage beyond all price; and that at the close of my life I may throw off the bitter husk and shell of this body, and possess that sweetest fruit which I shall taste evermore when I gaze upon the flashing radiance of thy supreme Divinity in the mild star of thy glorified humanity, giving forth ever new splendours; when thy sweetest countenance, fairer than fairest roses, shall communicate to me a new being by its transcendent beauty; when I shall be set free from the weariness of this life, and take my place with joy at thine everlasting feast; when I shall exult with gladness amidst the riches of thy love, even as a bride amidst the raptures of the king her spouse. Amen.

Now renew within your soul the grace of Confirmation.

O JESUS, King most triumphant, most exalted High-Priest, confirm and strengthen me with that power of thine which nothing can resist. O mighty Warrior, gird on me the sword of the Spirit; that through thee I may ever triumph over the countless ambushes and snares of the devil. Amen.

And then you will end with this prayer :

O LORD God, thou art not only my Creator, but also my Redeemer, renew thy Holy Spirit within me this day. Write my name, as that of a child new-born, amongst thy people of adoption; that, being admitted amongst the children of the promise, I may exult in that I have received by grace what I had not, could not have, by nature.

Make me strong in faith, joyful in hope, patient in my tribulations, glad in praising thee, fervent in spirit, faithful and devout in serving thee, my Lord, my God, and my true King; and give me to abide with thee and to watch with thee to the latest moment of my life; and then mine eyes shall behold with ecstasy the very reality of the things I now believe and hope for; then shall I see thee as thou art, then shall I see thee face to face. Then wilt thou make me like unto thee, O my Jesus ! Then the gazing on the beauty of thy countenance will be my everlasting joy, and my untroubled, unending rest ! Amen ! Amen ! Amen !

May the faithful God, the true *Amen*, which knoweth neither pause nor interruption, condescend to excite within me a thirst for that beloved *Amen* of which he is the source; may he render sweet to my taste that sweetest *Amen* wherewith he doth ever nourish his friends; may he make me perfect in the blessedness of that *Amen* wherewith he completeth and endeth all things; may he grant me to enjoy for evermore the delights of the ravishing and eternal *Amen* who will show me after this exile, according to my sure hope, the true *Amen*, Jesus, the Son of God, who alone sufficeth unto him that loves; who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is the source of all good things, and who despiseth nothing that he hath made. Amen ! Amen ! Amen !

In this last prayer commend to the gracious care of our Lord your faith and your baptismal innocence, which his grace has just renewed within you.

O MY sweetest Jesus, keep in the sanctuary of thy Heart, so full to overflowing of goodness, the purity of my baptismal innocence and the solemn engagements of my faith, that they may be kept in safety beneath thy faithful care, and that I may present them to thee whole and undefiled at the hour of my death. Grave on my heart the seal of thy sacred Heart, that I may live according to thy good pleasure; and that, after this exile, I may come to thee with gladness, without obstruction or delay. Amen.

SECOND EXERCISE

SPIRITUAL CONVERSION

AS St. Gertrude had particularly in view, in these Exercises, the welfare of souls consecrated to God by the vows of religion, the three following Exercises are destined specially for them. We believe, nevertheless, as we have already said, that persons who are devoutly serving God in the world may derive real advantage from their use; and we exhort such persons to read and study them.

The aim of this second Exercise is to commemorate the anniversary of the day on which the holy habit of religion was received. St. Gertrude employs the word *conversion* in the sense in which St. Benedict employs it in his Rule—to denote the act by which the soul determines to renounce the ordinary life of the world, in order to give itself entirely to God in the religious life. The graces which determine this first step are great; and the receiving the habit of religion, which is its reward, deserves a special commemoration throughout one's whole life.

In order to aid the soul to celebrate worthily so precious an anniversary, St. Gertrude prepares it by lively aspirations for the moment when she brings directly before it the blessed memory of that outward transformation it then underwent, when it laid aside the badge and livery of the world to be clothed with the noble

habit of the spouses of Jesus Christ. While thus uniting itself to the acts which the servant of God suggests to it, the soul receives within itself all the fulness of the blessings which responded to that first act of its dedication to God, whose spouse it then became.

SECOND EXERCISE

Spiritual Conversion

FOR THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE RECEIVING THE HOLY HABIT OF RELIGION.

When you wish to celebrate, by the renewal of your firm resolve, the memory of your first conversion, whereby you renounced the world, and turned your heart to God with all its energy, you may use this Exercise, beseeching God to build up within you as it were a monastery of love, adorned with all virtues.

O JESUS, thou well-beloved of my heart, it is a thing well known that no spiritual fruit can either grow or ripen unless the dew of thy Spirit descend upon it, and the genial glow of thy love warm it. Vouchsafe, then, to have compassion on me; and in that compassion receive me into the arms of thy love, and warm me thoroughly with the healthful breath of thy Spirit. Behold before thee my body and my soul; I give them over once again into thy possession.

My well-beloved, O my well-beloved, give me now thy blessing. Open to me, and lead me into the midst of the treasures of thy goodness. With my whole heart do I yearn after thee, and do beseech thee, thee alone, to possess me wholly. May I be thine, and be thou mine; may I grow with ever-renewed fervour beneath the glow of thy love; there may I flourish like the lilies of the valley by the waterside.

Turn now to the Blessed Virgin Mother, that she may deign herself to pray for you.

O FAIREST Lily, thou sweetest Mary, who art, after God, my greatest, surest hope, speak thou in my behalf in presence of thy dear Son; speak for me one effectual word. Plead my cause with all thy loving devotedness; obtain for me, in thy goodness, the object and aim of my desires; for in thee do I trust, in thee, who art, after Jesus, my one and only hope.

Show thyself towards me a Mother full of tenderness; obtain for me that I be received by our Lord into the hiding-place of his love, into that school wherein the Holy Spirit teacheth. Far above all others canst thou obtain for me this favour from thy Divine Son. O Mother most faithful, surround thy daughter with thy thoughtful care, that I may become an ever-living fruit of love, that I may grow in all holiness, and that the dew from heaven may uphold me in perseverance. Amen.

Implore the grace of the Holy Spirit, and ask of him that you may make progress in religion.

COME, Holy Ghost! Come, O God, who art love! Fill my poor heart, void, alas! of all good. Enkindle me, that I may love thee; enlighten me, that I may know thee; draw me, that I may find all my joy and my delight in thee; make me capable of enjoying thee.

And now set yourself free from the world and from all that is not Jesus, your heart's love.

O JESUS, full of love! who will give me wings like a dove? Then will I flee away in the ardour of my longing, and be at rest in thee.

Withdraw yourself, and hide yourself in Jesus.

O BELOVED Jesus, by that love which drew thee, my God, to be made man, that thou mightest seek and save that which was lost, come now into me, O my well-beloved, and enable me to penetrate even into thee. Hide me in the unshaken rock of thy fatherly protection. Draw me far apart from all that is not thee, into the wound of thy sweetest Heart, O thou dearest, fairest amongst all that are beloved. Give me a portion and an inheritance with thy people Israel, and admit me amongst those daughters of Jerusalem who form thy court. Amen.

Here prostrate yourself at the feet of Jesus.

BLESS me, O most loving Jesus; bless me now. Have mercy on me in all the compassion of thy most tender Heart. Grant that my soul may never choose the object of its love out of thee. Under the rule of thy grace, taught by that unction of which thou art the source, in the school of thy love, I shall advance rapidly and greatly.

At the moment when in spirit you receive the holy habit, say :

O HOLY Father, in that love wherewith thou hast lifted the light of thy countenance upon me, grant that I may advance and grow in thee in all holiness and all virtue.

O Christ, O my Jesus, in that love which constrained thee to redeem me with thine own precious Blood, clothe me with the purity of thy most holy life.

O divine Paraclete, thou who art strong as thou art holy, by that love which constrained thee to bind me to thee when thou didst give me a new and spiritual name, grant me to love thee with my whole heart, to cleave to thee with all my soul, to put forth all my utmost strength in loving and in serving thee, to live according to thy intention and will; and at the hour of my death do thou admit me, thus disposed and prepared by thee, and arrayed in a garment without spot, to the divine espousals which thou art preparing. Amen.

Pray the Virgin Mother to be your guide in religion, or in the state of life in which you are placed.

O MARY, Mother of God, and my most tender Mother, cover me with the snowy fleece of the Lamb, Jesus, fashioned of thy very substance. Through thee may he receive me, who is the supreme Love; may he nourish me, possess me, govern me, and perfect me. Amen.

Here offer anew your vow of chastity to the heavenly Bridegroom.

O SWEETEST Jesus, thee alone have I taken to be the faithful lover of my soul, the one chosen companion of my life; my soul longeth and languisheth for thee. I offer thee all the love of my heart, in choosing thee for my companion and guide. I offer thee my body and my soul to be employed in thy service alone and evermore; for I am Thine, and thou art mine.

O true Love, unite me anew to thee. To thee, O Spouse of delights, I offer again my chastity, in thine eyes so fair and of such price. I renew my vow of obedience to thee; for thy love hath ravished my heart, thy sweetness and thy goodness draw me towards thee. I pledge myself to do thy will alone; for to cleave to thee is highest blessedness, and to love thee is rapture unutterable.

Wherefore, O thou my heart's one and only possession, I offer myself to thee, that henceforward I may live to thee alone; for nothing have I found so exquisitely sweet, nothing so full of profit to my soul, as to be most intimately united to thee, O my well-beloved.

O fashion my heart like unto thy sacred Heart, and then my whole life shall flow on in conformity with thy good pleasure.

℟. The kingdom of this world and all its pomps have I despised, for the love of Jesus Christ my Lord: * whom I have seen, whom

I have loved; in whom I have believed, to whom I have given my love.

℣. My heart hath uttered a good word: I speak my works to the King: * whom I have seen, whom I have loved; in whom I have believed, to whom I have given my love.

℟. O thou who art the source and guardian of all purity, who, being born of a pure Virgin, hast kindled all around thee the holy love of chastity: * O Christ, who art thyself the Pattern, Hope, and Crown of virgins, by the intercession of Blessed Mary, Virgin and Mother, keep me pure and chaste in soul and in body.

℣. O Source of life eternal, Principle of light unfailing, blessed Author of every good work: * O Christ, who art thyself the Pattern, Hope, &c.

PRAYER

OALMIGHTY everlasting God, look favourably on these our prayers; and grant to us thy servants, who, for the love of thy Name, are bound together in one bond of charity, that we may have a true faith, an unbroken hope, a genuine humility, a holy devotion, a perfect charity, a constant and persevering application to good works. By the merits and intercession of all the saints, vouchsafe to implant in our hearts a simple affection, a pure and unspotted religion, an acceptable obedience, an abiding peace, a right and pure intention, a holy conscience. Grant us compunction of spirit and strength

of soul, that our life may flow away without spot or stain, and may have an end without reproach or rebuke; that our progress towards thee may know neither delay nor remission, so that we may be counted meet to enter into thine everlasting kingdom. Amen.

THIRD EXERCISE

THE ESPOUSALS AND CONSECRATION

IN this Third Exercise St. Gertrude sets forth in lyric strains the mystery of divine love, the union of the Bridegroom and the bride. She takes the solemn ritual of the consecration of Virgins, and leads the religious soul entrusted to her guidance through the several details of that sublime action, accompanying each detail with acts and aspirations which impress most deeply on the soul all its meaning and all its efficacy.

The solemn ceremony of that great day which gave to our Lord one spouse the more comes forth in all its grandeur, with its ineffable joys, and its hopes founded on the promise and covenant of Jesus himself. Nor can Jesus fail to draw yet more closely the tie which binds him to this spouse of his choice, while she is reviewing with such gladness the very least circumstances of that marriage-feast amidst the august pomp of which she pronounced the sacred and eternal vow by which she died to herself, and gave herself irrevocably to the Great King of heaven and earth.

THIRD EXERCISE

The Espousals and Consecration

FOR THE ANNIVERSARY DAY OF THE SACRED PROFESSION

In the following manner shalt thou celebrate the day of thy spiritual espousals, the glad day in which thy soul was bound unto Jesus, the heavenly Bridegroom, in an irrevocable bond of love.

VOICE OF CHRIST SPEAKING TO THE SOUL

LOOK upon me, O my dove, that thou mayest know me again. I am Jesus, thy Friend dear above all others; open to me the inmost sanctuary of thy heart. I am of that fair land wherein the angels dwell, and my beauty is beyond compare. I am the Splendour of the everlasting Sun. Yea, I am that bright spring-day, whose glory knoweth no equal, whose sun shall never go down. The majesty of my glory, that majesty which is my very essence, filleth heaven and earth, and eternity alone can compass and measure it. Alone I wear on my head the crown-royal of my Godhead. My brow is encircled also with a garland of roses, in memory of the Blood which I have shed for thee. Neither beneath the sun, nor far on high beyond the sun, wilt thou find any like unto me.

At my call come forth to meet me the choirs of Virgins, pure as lilies. I go before them

into the realm of everlasting life, into delights of which my Godhead is the source; I feed them with joy and blessedness unpalling and unending. And yet I do not disdain to stoop to this lowly earth, that I may gather thence the violets without spot which grow therein.

Wherefore it is my will to unite inseparably to myself the soul which consents to love me, and I will love it with tender ardour in return. I will teach it that angel's song, whose melody flows forth from me with sweetness so exquisite that it ravishes my spouse, and binds her to me in sweetest ties of love. That which I am by nature, shall she become by my grace. I will clasp her in the arms of my love on the Heart of my Godhead; and the glowing love I feel towards her shall cause her to melt as wax in presence of fire.[1] If thou wilt be mine, my beloved, my dove,[2] thou must love me with tenderness, with wisdom, with strength; so shalt thou taste the sweetest delights I promise thee.

LOVE'S INVITATION OF THE SOUL

AWAKE, arise, O soul; shouldest thou slumber still? Hearken to the message wherewith I am charged unto thee. Far above, beyond the skies, dwelleth a King who longeth to make thee all his own. His whole Heart yearneth towards thee; he loves thee beyond measure. So tender and so faithful is his love, that he hath left his kingdom and

[1] Cant. v. 6. [2] Cant. ii. 10.

humbled himself for thy sake. He hath gone forth in quest of thee; and while seeking thee, he hath submitted to be treated as a vile criminal. So intimately and with such glowing love doth he love thee, and with such eagerness doth he long to give thee proof and token of his love, that for thee he hath not shrunk from giving up to death his fairest Body, fairer than the sons of men.

He it is who hath washed thee in his own Blood, who hath ransomed thee by his death. And shall he wait still longer that thy heart return his love? Hath he not bought, at cost sufficing, both thee and thy love? He hath loved thee more than his own honour, yea, more than his comely Body, which he hath resigned to outrage for love of thee. He who loves thee so tenderly, so faithfully, and so well, hath some reason to expect from thee some small return of love. If it seem good unto thee now to accept his love without further delay, he is ready to make thee his spouse. Awake, arise, and hasten to assure him of thy firm resolve.

VOICE OF THE SOUL, OFFERING ITSELF TO GOD

I AM but an orphan, motherless, and forlorn, poor and destitute of all. Out of Jesus I have neither consolation nor hope. He alone can slake my soul's deep thirst. Him alone my heart hath chosen for the object of its love; but he is King of kings and Lord of lords. If

a prince so mighty deign to show favour to me so vile and so wretched; if he act indeed towards me according to his tender mercy and his boundless compassions, a condescension so vast is of his pure pity alone, of his sovereign goodwill to me. And as for me, I am his wholly and without reserve; my soul and my body both are in his hands; let him do with me whatsoever his love pleaseth.

O who will give me to be according to his heart, that he might find in me what he seeketh and desireth, what might respond to the blessed choice he deigns to make of me! Then alone shall I know consolation and joy.

O Jesus, thou one and only Love of my heart, O my beloved overflowing with tenderness, loved, loved, loved far above all that hath ever been loved, towards thee my heart doth sigh and languish with desire. Thou art to it as a spring-day, instinct with quickening life, and fragrant with the balmy sweetness of countless flowers. O may this most intimate union with thee be effected in me, O thou true and living Sun! Then shall thy genial influence cause to spring forth in my soul both flowers and fruits of a growth in holiness not unworthy of thee; I await thy coming in breathless eagerness.

Come then to me as the turtle-dove to its mate. With thy divine charms thou hast wounded my heart.[1] O my beloved, my well-beloved, if thou refuse me this, my bliss

[1] Cant. iv. 9.

throughout eternity will still lack somewhat of its perfection. O thou whom my soul loveth, fulfil both my desire and thine own.

VOICE OF CHRIST

I WILL espouse thee in my Holy Spirit; I will unite myself to thee in an indissoluble bond. I will possess thee in thyself; thou shalt be the willing prisoner of the love I bear thee. I will cover thee with the princely purple of my precious Blood; of my death so bitter I will fashion for thee a diadem finer than most refined gold. I, yea, even I myself, take upon me to fulfil to overflowing all thy heart's desires, and I will be thy Blessedness throughout eternity.

Here begins the solemn consecration whereby the soul binds itself by vow wholly and entirely to Jesus, its one and only Spouse, and unites itself to him by chastity, cleaving for ever to this heavenly Spouse by perfect purity of body, of heart, and of the senses, and by a love of union which it shall never more desecrate by directing it towards any created object. Begin then thus to celebrate the perfections of the Spouse who cometh :

WHO is like unto thee, O Jesus Christ, my Lord, my Love; thou who art so high, so incomprehensible, so immense, and who yet lookest down upon low things, even upon the lowest?[1] Who amongst the mighty

[1] Ps. cxii. 6.

can be compared unto thee, who dost vouchsafe to choose what is weakest in the world? Who is like unto thee, thou Creator of heaven and earth, whom thrones and dominations lowly obey, and who dost nevertheless take thy delights amongst the children of men?

What is thy grandeur and what thy majesty, O thou King of kings and Lord of lords? The whole host of heaven doth worship thee, and yet thou settest thy heart upon man. Riches and glory are with thee; thou overflowest with delights, and lo, thou seekest unto thyself a spouse of earth. O Love divine, whither dost thou abase thy majesty? O Love, thou pourest forth into the abyss of our utter misery the streams of that fount of wisdom which is in thy divine Essence. Thou alone, O my Love, thou alone art that exquisite wine the abundance whereof shall inebriate my heart for ever.

Acknowledge the love of Jesus in the tokens of it which he has given you.

YES, he is truly our God, he who hath loved us with an unconquerable love, with an unwearying charity, with an unutterable tenderness; who hath united to his Godhead the very substance of our body taken from the earth, that he might be our only Bridegroom, and might choose from among us his spouses; he it is who hath loved us with all his whole being. By loving him in return the creature becomes his spouse.

In memory of the invitation addressed unto you by the priest, when he said, Come, come, come, *say :*

YES, I come, I come towards thee, O most loving Jesus; towards thee whom I have loved, whom I have sought after, whom I have longed for. Drawn by thy sweetness, thy compassion, and thy love, I answer to thy call, loving thee with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength. Let me not be disappointed of my hope; but deal with me according to thy gentleness, and according to the multitude of thy mercies.

Invoke the aid of all the saints, saying this Litany :

O HOLY Trinity, one God, uphold me by thy divine power; guide me with thy divine wisdom; make me according to thy Heart, by thy divine goodness.

O heavenly Father, King of kings, deign to consummate within me the espousals of thy Son, who himself is also King.

O Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, may my love unite me to thee; for thou art my King and my God.

O Holy Ghost, divine Paraclete, unite my heart to Jesus for evermore in that bond of love whereby thou dost unite the Father and the Son.

Holy Mary, mother of the King, of him who is the spotless Lamb and Spouse of

virgins, lead me by the chastity of my heart and of all my senses to the espousals of thy Son Jesus.

O ye holy angels and archangels, obtain for me that I may enter into the bridal sanctuary of Jesus, my Spouse, with a purity like unto yours.

O holy patriarchs and prophets, obtain for me a love such as Jesus, my Spouse, demands from me.

O ye holy apostles, pray for me, that the Word of God, who is the true Life, whom your hands have handled, may kiss me with the mysterious kiss of his mouth.[1]

O ye holy martyrs, obtain for me that yearning desire which merits the palm of martyrdom, that thus I may go forth to meet him whose crown is wreathed of lilies and roses.

O holy confessors, obtain for me that I may imitate, in the finished beauty of holiness, the life of Jesus, my Spouse.

O ye holy virgins, obtain for me that chaste, tender affection, which may give me the right to make my nest, as a turtle-dove, in the wound of love which is in the Heart of Jesus, my Spouse.

O all ye saints, obtain for me that I may go into the marriage-supper of the Lamb with that meet preparation wherein ye were admitted to behold the face of God.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, and make me according to thine own Heart.

[1] Cant. i. 1

Have mercy on me, O Lord, and free me from all that withholds me from coming to thee.

By thine Incarnation, grant that I may love thee with tenderness, with wisdom, and with strength.

By thy Passion and thy Death, grant that I may die to myself, and live to thee alone.

By thy glorious Resurrection and thy wondrous Ascension, grant that I may go onwards day by day from virtue to virtue.

At the hour of my death help and refresh me, O Lord, by the bowels of thy compassion, and gladden me by showing me then the light of thy countenance.

In the day of judgment let my soul know no fear; but may I hear from thee the gracious words, Come, ye blessed of my Father.

By thine august Mother, effect in me, as in thy true spouse, the most intimate union of thy chaste love.

We sinners beseech thee to hear us.

Vouchsafe to confirm in me for thyself this vow of chastity which I offer thee, and to preserve it perfect and unspotted as the apple of thine eye.

We beseech thee to hear us.

Amidst the endearments of thy love give me to feel who thou art, and how great thy majesty.

We beseech thee to hear us.

Give me the earnest of thy Spirit, and a dowry of most entire love.

We beseech thee to hear us.

Grant that at the hour of my death I may

go forth to meet thee with the wise virgins, even as the bride goeth forth to meet the bridegroom, adorned with the wedding-garment, and having my lamp trimmed and alight.

We beseech thee to hear us.

Do thou deign then, with the kiss of thy mouth, to introduce me, as her who is all thine own, into the inmost sanctuary of the delights of thy love.

We beseech thee to hear us.

Grant that all we who serve thee in this place may love thee always with all cur whole hearts; unite us inseparably to thee, and render us evermore pleasing in thy sight by purity of mind and of body.

We beseech thee to hear us.

Grant us the grace always to ask for what thou lovest to grant.

We beseech thee to hear us.

O Jesus, Son of the living God, hear us in the might of thy divine love.

O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, in the greatness of thy mercy blot out all my sins.

O Lamb of God, who dost blot out the sins of the world, supply all my defects and negligences, in thine inextinguishable love.

O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant that I may depart in peace when my last hour cometh, and see thee at once face to face.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

O Jesus, who art a Bridegroom like unto the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys,[1] though death doth separate the soul from the body, grant that thy love may ever unite my heart unto thine, so that their union may be indissoluble.

Receive me, O my Jesus, into the abyss of thy tender mercy, and wash me from all stain in the great deep of thy compassion. Receive me, O my Jesus, into the most tender embrace of thy love, that I may be united to thee evermore by a most perfect bond. Receive me, O my Jesus, into the ineffable covenant of thy love, and kiss me with the kiss of thy divine mouth.[2]

Repeat this prayer to obtain perfect chastity of soul and body.

O GOD, who of thy goodness dost deign to dwell in the chaste of body and the pure of heart; O God, who in that same thy Word, by whom all things were made, hast restored the nature of man, which the wiles of the devil had defiled in our first parents; and who hast not merely reinstated that nature in its original innocence, but hast raised it to the enjoyment of a favour which should seem reserved for the life to come, in that thou dost here make equal to the angels thy creatures who are still awaiting death; vouchsafe to look on me, who now come to place in thy hands the pledge and vow of a perfect chastity.

[1] Cant. ii. 1 [2] Cant. i. 1.

I offer myself unto thee, unto thee from whom I have received the grace to make thee such an offering.

And of a truth, how could the soul, as yet enthralled by mortal flesh, rise above the impulse of nature, the charm of liberty, the blandishments of habit, and all the enticements of youth, if thou didst not thyself enkindle in its will this love of chastity, if thou didst not call forth in our hearts so glowing an ardour and so irresistible an energy? But thy grace hath been diffused far and wide amongst all people, and hath deigned to adopt the heirs of the new covenant, more than the stars of heaven in multitude, from amongst all nations under heaven. And besides those virtues which thou hast implanted in the sons thou hast begotten not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, but by thine own Holy Spirit, thine inexhaustible munificence hath infused into certain hearts a gift of a higher order. Without diminishing in any degree the honour wherewith thou hast clothed the married state, nay, even in confirming and enlarging the blessing which from the beginning thou hast pronounced upon that holy union, it hath pleased thee that some souls of nobler stamp should decline the marriage bond, and thus be called to realise the lofty mystery which that bond represents; should abstain from espousals of earth, and aspire, with all their heart's whole love, to that divine union of which earthly espousals are but the symbol and type.

And holy virginity hath not been unmindful of its Author. Ever has it striven to emulate the purity of angels, and has disclaimed all other Spouse than Jesus, who is at once the Son of a virgin mother, and the tender Spouse of those who for love of him alone make vow of perpetual virginity. Wherefore, O Lord, vouchsafe to grant thy help and thy guidance to me who implore thine aid; to me who desire to be confirmed in my resolve by thy blessing, full of loving mystery. Let not the devil, always on the watch to spread his perfidious snares in the way of those who covet thus the best gifts, ever take advantage of the inadvertence of my will to sully the perfect continence which I have promised thee; never may he so prevail as to shake in a virgin soul that continence to which even widows are obliged.

Establish thou within me, O my Lord, by the gift of thy Spirit, a modesty sheltered by prudence, an affability tempered by wisdom, a gentleness seasoned with gravity, a liberty of spirit always chaste. While I am fervent in charity, never let my love cling to aught but thee alone; may my life be filled with merit, and detached from all flattery. Let the holiness of my body and the purity of my soul glorify thee unceasingly; may the sense of thy love fill my heart, and my service unto thee be a service of love. Be thou my glory and my joy, my delight, my consolation in sorrow, my sure counsel in uncertainty. Be thou my hiding-place from the injustice of

men, my patience in tribulation, my abundance in poverty, my sustenance in fasting, my rest in vigil, my healing in sickness.

O thou whom I fain would love above all, grant me to find my all in thee, and to keep faithfully what I have promised unto thee. O thou who searchest the heart, and who takest pleasure, not in beauty of outward form, but in interior purity of soul, grant that I may have a place among the wise virgins. There will I await the heavenly Bridegroom; having in my hand my lamp lighted, and trimmed with the oil of meet and careful preparation. So shall I not be confounded at the sudden coming of the sovereign King; but, all peaceful and clothed with light, I shall rejoin with songs of gladness the choirs of virgins who have gone before me. So shall I not be shut out with the foolish virgins, but in humble confidence enter with the wise virgins into the palace of the great King; where, in virtue of my patient and persevering chastity, I shall dwell for ever with the heavenly Lamb.[1]

In memory of the moment when you received the veil, receive it anew in spirit, and say :

℟. The Lord hath clothed me with a garment of salvation; he hath covered me with a veil of gladness * and his hand hath crowned me as a bride.

[1] This exquisite prayer is taken wholly from the Pontifical, "in consecratione Virginum." St. Gertrude has simply applied to herself personally the sublime words which the Bishop pronounced in the name of the Church, in the ceremony of her consecration to God.

℣. The Lord hath put on me a necklace of gold, and hath adorned me with fairest jewels: * and his hand hath crowned me as a bride.

PRAYER

O MY Best-beloved, chosen amongst ten thousand, grant me to rest beneath the shadow of thy love, and spread over me as a covering the succour of thy perfect holiness. Give me with thine own hand this veil, which represents purity; rule me and lead me evermore, that I may bring it up to thy glorious judgment-seat, with the fruit of a chaste innocence increased a hundred-fold. Amen.

Think of the crown which was set on your head, and say :

ANTIPHON. He hath placed his mark on my face, that I should admit no other lover than himself.

℟. It is Jesus whom I love; I am become the spouse of him whose Mother was a virgin, and who was begotten spiritually of his Father, of him whose sweetest music already sounds in mine ears: * If I love him, I am chaste; when I touch him, I am pure; when I possess him, I am a virgin.

Say moreover :

O JESUS, my Brother and my Spouse, thou King supreme, God and Lamb of God, set thy mark on the face of my soul,

and grave it so deeply there that out of thee no creature may attract my choice, nor excite my desire, nor possess my love. O thou who art dearer far to me than all that is dearest, deign to unite thyself to me in a bond so intimate, in a union so august, that I may ever be thy true and faithful spouse in that love which is stronger than death.

Think of the ring which was put on your finger, and say :

ANTIPHON. He hath given me his ring for a pledge, even he who excelleth all the sons of men in greatness and in splendour.

℟. Already is his Flesh united to mine by the heavenly food which he hath given to me, and his Blood glows in my cheek: * whose Mother is a virgin, and who was begotten spiritually by his Father.

℣. I am his bride whom the angels lowly serve, whose beauty sun and moon admire:* whose Mother is ever virgin, and who was begotten spiritually by his Father.

℣. I have tasted the honey and the milk of his lips, and his Blood glows in my cheek:* If I love him, I am chaste; when I touch him, I am pure; when I possess him, I am a virgin.

PRAYER

O MY Jesus, who art the Flower and Fruit of thy Mother's virginal purity; O mine Inheritance and my kingly dowry,

thou who hast given me as a pledge the ring of fidelity, set upon me the seal of thy Holy Spirit; make me what it beseems me to be for thee, O my living Lily, my Flower most beautiful and most beloved. Unite me to thee in a love so fervent, that for love of thee and for desire of thee I may long to die; let the union which now makes me thine be so intimate that it may ravish and bear away my heart, so that it may no longer be in me, but abide in thee alone by the inseparable union of love.

℟. The kingdom of this world and all its pomps have I despised for the love of Jesus Christ my Lord: * whom I have seen, whom I have loved; in whom I have believed; to whom I have given my love.

℣. My heart hath uttered a good word; I speak my works to the King: * whom I have seen, whom I have loved; in whom I have believed; to whom I have given my love.

PRAYER

O ALMIGHTY God, grant that I, thine unworthy servant, who have desired to be consecrated to thee, in hope of everlasting good things, may persevere constantly and faithfully in this holy resolution. Vouchsafe, O Almighty Father, to sanctify me, to bless me, and to hallow me for ever. Give me humility, chastity, obedience, charity, and all good works. Bestow on me, O Lord, in recompense of my feeble works, the glory

thou hast promised: grant me, for my exterior reserve, the grace to make progress in respectful awe of thee; and for my purity the grace to attain unto holiness; so that I may one day be admitted to praise thy glorious majesty with thy holy angels for evermore. Amen.

In memory of the blessing which the Bishop gave you, pray that you may now be blessed by the whole sovereign Trinity.

MAY the gentle fatherhood and the divine majesty of God the Father deign to bless me, and to concur with me in my every action! May the sweet relationship and human brotherhood I have with Jesus my God bless me, and consummate me in union! May the gentle tenderness and the glowing love of the Holy Spirit bless me, and render me faithful in every good work! May the whole sovereign Trinity bless me, strengthen me, and stablish me!

May the glorious Humanity of Jesus Christ my Lord likewise bless me, and unite me for ever to him who hath vouchsafed to choose me out of the world, who hath shown his unbounded love for me in dying for me, and who hath raised me to the dignity of his spouses! May this dear and mighty benediction, which bringeth salvation, bestow on me perfection in all virtues, and keep me in the unspotted chastity I have vowed! May it uphold me in my resolve, and give me strength to persevere even unto the end in humility,

in purity, in patience, and in all holiness! May it render me meet to receive, after this life, the crown of the faithful spouses of Jesus, and to be admitted into the white-robed choir of virgins, who, fairer than lilies, follow thee whithersoever thou goest, O thou Lamb without spot, thou Son of the Virgin Mary, thou flower and crown of virginity. Amen.

And now beseech the merciful Lord to give you into the keeping of the Virgin Mary his Mother, all fair as the lily, who is represented to you by the abbess, to whose care the Bishop intrusted you.

AND now, O my Jesus, thou one desire of my heart, I beseech thee to commend and consign me to thy Mother, the virginal and sovereign Rose. May she ever be, for love of thee, the guide and the keeper of my virginity! Give me to those tender hands which once ministered unto thee, unto thee who art the Son of God the Father, that they may defend me, and aid me in the performance of my sacred duties; may they direct me, and preserve me from the slightest stain that may sully the life of continence I have embraced. Say, O say to that virginal Rose: "Take her also beneath thy maternal care; I commend her to thy keeping, O my Mother, with all the urgency of the love I bear to her, and see that thou present her to me at the last in purity, and fashioned by thee after mine own Heart." Amen.

Then recite the hymn of thanksgiving, Te Deum laudamus.

WE praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship thee: the Father everlasting.
To thee all angels cry aloud: the heavens and all the powers therein.
To thee cherubim and seraphim: continually do cry.
Holy, holy, holy: Lord God of Sabaoth.
Heaven and earth are full: of the majesty of thy glory.
The glorious choir of the apostles: praise thee.
The admirable company of the prophets: praise thee.
The white-robed army of martyrs: praise thee.
The Holy Church throughout all the world: doth acknowledge thee.
The Father: of an infinite majesty.
Thy adorable, true: and only Son.
Also the Holy Ghost: the Comforter.
Thou art the King of Glory: O Christ.
When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man: thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.
When thou hadst overcome the sting of death: thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God: in the glory of the Father.
We believe that thou shalt come: to be our Judge.

We pray thee, therefore, help thy servants: whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious Blood.

Make them to be numbered with thy saints: in glory everlasting.

O Lord, save thy people: and bless thine inheritance.

Govern them: and lift them up for ever.

Day by day: we magnify thee.

And we praise thy Name for ever, yea, for ever and ever.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, this day: to keep us without sin.

O Lord, have mercy upon us: have mercy upon us.

O Lord, let thy mercy be showed upon us: as we have hoped in thee.

O Lord, in thee have I hoped: let me not be confounded for ever.

Offer your praises to the adorable Trinity as follows :

O HOLY Trinity, in whose Bosom shine in undecaying splendour the everliving Godhead, Love, and Wisdom.

O Father, thou sole Fount of that might which is thy nature; thou, with whom the wisdom is coessential, from whom goodness is welling forth unceasingly, in whom charity glows as a consuming fire, from whom holiness diffuses itself throughout the multitude of thy chosen, and goodness yearns to embrace all whom thine hands have made; to thee be all thanksgiving, to thee all power and glory.

O thou Word sublime, who art the mighty cedar of Libanus, and who, in peerless majesty, spreadest far above the cherubim the branches of thy divinity; thou hast delighted to seek in the lowest depth of this valley of sorrow and tears a lowly plant of hyssop, that thou mightest unite it to thyself in most intimate union, and make it thy bride in an unutterable love.

O Holy Ghost, who art Love, and the loving bond of the Holy Trinity, thou dost rest and take thy delights with the children of men, in that holy chastity which, through thy might and thy attractiveness, flourishes here below as the rose amidst thorns. O Holy Spirit! O Love, Love! teach me the way that leadeth up to so blissful an abode, what path of life bringeth to the meadows on which falls the dew divine, where the heart doth slake its eager thirst. O Love, thou, thou alone knowest the Way which leadeth to the Truth and the Life. In thee is effected that all-transcending union which conjoins the divine Persons of the Holy Trinity. By thee, O thou Holy Spirit, all most precious gifts are poured forth on us; from thee too comes the living seed from which spring fruits of life; from thee flows forth the sweetest honey of the delights which are in God alone; from thee fall on us the fruitful showers of the blessings of the Lord of Hosts: these all are thy priceless gifts, O Holy Spirit of God.

O Son of God, O Love, my Love, make ready for me the way which leads to thee, the path of fair love. Drawn after thee by

most chaste affection, bound to thee by the mystic nuptial tie, I will follow thee everywhere whithersoever thou goest, even to the high hill whereon thou reignest and rulest in the peerless majesty of thy divine essence, even to the fair abode where thou sheddest abroad the treasures of thy thrilling tenderness, and dost kindle and sustain the flame of thy consuming Love, where thou leadest after thee the soft-shining choirs of ten thousand times ten thousand virgin souls, clothed with raiment whiter than snow, and ever repeating the ecstatic burden of the marriage song of the Lamb. Meanwhile, O Jesus, my Love, keep me; shelter me in this valley of sorrows beneath the shadow of thy love; and when this weary exile shall end, do thou lead me and bring me, pure and without spot, into thy Holy Place, and let my portion be with thy chosen virgin souls. There shall I slake my burning thirst at the living waters which gush forth evermore from thy divine tenderness; there shall I be satisfied and at rest in the sure enjoyment of thy sweetest love. Amen! Amen! And let every living creature say, Amen!

FOURTH EXERCISE

RENEWAL OF THE RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

IT may seem at first sight that this Exercise is but a repetition of the preceding, but it will be found that their intention is entirely distinct. The object of the third Exercise was to celebrate the actual anniversary of the day on which the soul gave itself to God in religion by a sacred and irrevocable vow. In this fourth Exercise, an expression is suggested for the feelings with which the soul may at any time renew the act by which it was consecrated to God. It is well known what graces this act of renewal draws down upon the soul, whenever it is made; and St. Gertrude would not leave her spiritual daughters without guidance in an exercise so profitable, and so acceptable to God. To this end she has again had recourse to the sublime ceremonial of the Church in the consecration of Virgins, and has drawn up this Exercise, similar and not inferior in beauty to the third.

FOURTH EXERCISE

Renewal of the Religious Profession

Whensoever you desire to renew in spirit your religious profession, or to follow the prompting of the fervour of your soul, you will offer yourself wholly to God, as a sacrifice of sweet fragrance, giving expression to your glowing desire in these words :

O ALMIGHTY and merciful Father, full of compassion and pity, whose goodness is greater far than the malice of thy creatures, I come to thee this day—I who have not improved the time which has passed away since thou didst plant me and engraft me as a tree in the ground of this holy state of religion—I who have allowed all my whole life to flow away and waste in barrenness—behold, I come, beseeching thee, by thine own irrepressible love, by the love of thy dearest virgin-mother Mary, our glorious patroness, and by the intercession of blessed Benedict, our venerable founder, that thou wouldst deign to look down with the eyes of thy charity and thy mercy on this poor withered branch, that it may be quickened by thee with restored life, and bloom and flourish again in true holiness. O make me to observe with most scrupulous fidelity the rules of holy religion and the duties of the spiritual life; enable me ever to bring forth manifold fruit of virtue and of holiness to thee, who hast conde-

scended to love me; that when thou shalt come to me to gather them, at the hour of my death, I may appear before thee with much fruit in full maturity, consummate in the perfection of holy religion. Amen.

Implore the blessing of God.

O GOD, who art my sweetest Love, bless me with thy divine almightiness, thy wisdom, and thy goodness; grant me to follow after thee with a ready will, to deny and renounce myself sincerely, and both in heart and spirit evermore to walk with thee in perfectness.

Implore the grace of the Holy Ghost.

O GOD, my sweetest and most tender Love, send down upon me from heaven thy Holy Ghost, and create within me a new heart and a new spirit. By thy holy unction teach me all things; for thee have I chosen out of thousands,[1] and I love thee with a love stronger than all other love, stronger than that with which I love my own soul. Sustain in my soul the life, the energy, the vigour, and the beauty, which come of love, and which attract thy love and thy tenderness; for all my desire is unto thee, my whole heart goeth eagerly forth after thee. I am now to stand in thy presence; make my worship worthy of thee. Amen.

[1] Cant. v. 10.

Listen again to the call which the Bishop addressed to you in the name of Christ : Come ! *and answer yet again :*

Yes, my Jesus, I come to thee; to thee whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, to whom I have given my love.

PRAYER

O MY Jesus, thou art the source of all my joy, the unceasing song of my heart and my lips. Yes, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. For when once thou shalt have taken my heart as thine own possession, none shall evermore separate me from thee.

At the second invitation of the Bishop, Come !

Yes, my Jesus, I come to thee; to thee whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, to whom I have given my love.

PRAYER

O MY Jesus, my well-beloved, I take thee to my heart in the close embrace of divine love. I hold thee fast as mine own with all the love of my heart; and even though thou bless me a thousand times ere thou go, yet never will I let thee go.

At the third invitation : Come, O my daughter !

Yes, my Jesus, I come to thee; to thee whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, to whom I have given my love.

PRAYER

O THOU Son of God, may all the power and the virtue of thy Godhead praise thee on my behalf; may all the love thy sacred Manhood can feel be turned upon thyself to satisfy my debt of love to thee; may all the peerless magnificence of the majesty of the adorable Trinity glorify thee, sing thy praise, honour thy perfections, and utter forth the unutterable praise of that Godhead in which thou sufficest to thyself, and dost supply all the defects and shortcomings of thy creatures, of thine own unfathomable deep of perfection.

When, after the third invitation, the Bishop adds the words : Hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord, *say :*

PRAYER

O JESUS, O good Shepherd, give me to hear and know thy voice. Carry me in thy arms, let me rest in thy bosom, thy sheep whom the Holy Ghost hath rendered fruitful in holiness. There shalt thou teach me how to fear thee and how to love thee, and tell me what I must do to be permitted to follow thee. Amen.

ANTIPHON. Draw near unto him, and his light shall shine upon thee, and thou shalt not be put to confusion

PRAYER

BEHOLD, I draw near unto thee, my God, thou consuming fire. Consume me, let me be swallowed up, and lost as a grain of dust in the fiery glow of thy love. Cause the light of thy countenance to shine upon me, and my darkness shall become light before thee, even as the sun at noonday. Behold, I come unto thee, thou beatitude of my soul. By that vehement love which draws thee down to us thy creatures, that thou mayest unite us inseparably to thyself, make me one with thee.

Recite the Psalm, Domini est terra.

THE earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and all they that dwell therein.

For he hath founded it upon the seas: and prepared it upon the rivers.

Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in his holy place?

The innocent in hands and clean of heart: who hath not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbour.

He shall receive a blessing from the Lord: and mercy from God his Saviour.

This is the generation of them that seek him: of them that seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Lift up your gates, O ye princes; and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in.

Who is this King of Glory? The Lord who is strong and mighty: the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in.

Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory.

PRAYER

VOUCHSAFE, O sweet Jesus, to write my name and to reckon me amongst those of thy household who know thee, O God of Israel; in the family of those who seek to behold thy face, O God of Jacob; in the family of those who love thee, O God of hosts. Grant that in innocency of life and purity of heart I may receive thy blessing, O my God, and my salvation. Amen.

Here recite the Psalm, Miserere.

HAVE mercy upon me, O God: according to thy great mercy.

And according to the multitude of thy tender mercies: blot out all mine iniquity.

Wash me yet more from mine iniquity: and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge mine iniquity: and my sin is always before me.

Against thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight: *I confess it; vouchsafe to pardon me,* that thou mayest be justified in thy

words, and mayest overcome when thou art judged.

For behold, I was conceived in iniquities: and in sin did my mother conceive me.

For behold, thou hast loved truth: the uncertain and hidden things of thy wisdom thou hast made manifest unto me.

Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop *as a leper*, and I shall be cleansed: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.

Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness: and the bones that were humbled shall rejoice.

Turn away thy face from my sins: and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence: and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation: and strengthen me with a perfect spirit.

I will teach the unjust thy ways: and the wicked shall be converted unto thee.

Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall extol thy justice.

Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord: and my mouth shall declare thy praise.

For if thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would surely have given it: with burnt-offerings thou wilt not be delighted.

The sacrifice of God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Deal favourably, O Lord, in thy good-will, with Zion: that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up.

Then shalt thou accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations, and whole burnt-offerings: then shall they lay calves on thine altars.

ANTIPHON. Create in me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me.

PRAYER

O MY Love, plunge me and bury me in the great deep of thy charity. All that thou doest for me is of thine own free and undeserved goodness: but cleanse me from every stain in the streams of thy grace; let me be made anew in thee, O my soul's true Life. Amen.

Recite the Psalm, Qui habitat.

HE that dwelleth in the help of the Most High: shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven.

He shall say unto the Lord, Thou art my upholder and my refuge: my God, in him will I hope.

For he hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters: and from the sharp word.

He shall overshadow thee with his shoulders: and under his wings shalt thou trust.

His truth shall compass thee with a shield: thou shalt not be afraid for the terror of the night.

For the arrow that flieth in the day, for the plague that walketh in the darkness: for the assault of the evil one in the noonday.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh thee.

But with thine eyes shalt thou behold: and shalt see the reward of the wicked.

For thou, O Lord, art my hope: thou hast set my refuge very high.

There shall no evil approach unto thee: nor shall the scourge come nigh thy dwelling.

For he hath given his angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways.

In their hands shall they bear thee up: lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: the lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet.

God will say of thee, Because he hath hoped in me, I will deliver him: I will protect him, because he hath known my name.

He shall cry unto me, and I will hear him: I am with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and glorify him.

With length of days will I fill him: and I will show unto him my salvation.

PRAYER

O THOU who art the defence of my soul and my refuge in the evil day, cover me with thy protection, hide me beneath thy shadow, succour me with the buckler of thy

truth. Be thou with me in all my tribulation; defend me from all peril of soul and body, O thou my hope and my defence. And at last, after this long weary exile, show to me thyself, O my much-loved Saviour. Amen.

LITANY

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O HOLY Trinity, One God, grant that my heart may fear thee, love thee, and be conformed unto thee in all things; for thou art my soul's one true Love.

O holy Mary, thou Paradise of sanctity and lily of purity, be thou my guide, and the shelter and defence of my chastity; for all the beauty of the Truth and the Life shineth forth in thee.

O all ye holy Angels and Archangels, obtain for me that I may ever render, in body and in soul, acceptable service to the great King, whom to serve is to reign; to that great King in whose presence ye stand, doing his will unresting, unwearied, with joy ineffable.

O St. John Baptist, obtain for me that I be ever enlightened by that true Light to whom thou didst come to bear witness.

O Abraham our father, obtain for me that faith and that obedience which raised thee to be called the Friend of the living God.

O Moses, dear to God, obtain for me the spirit of meekness, peace, and charity which

made thee worthy to speak face to face with the Lord of majesty.

O David, king and prophet most illustrious, obtain for me that entire fidelity, that docility and humility which made thee a man after God's own heart, acceptable and precious to the divine King.

O all ye holy Patriarchs and Prophets, obtain for me that my mind and my understanding be opened.

O St. Peter, prince of the Apostles, shatter with thy heavenly might the bonds of my sins.

O St. Paul, thou vessel of election, obtain for me the gift of a true love.

O St. John, who art so dear to me because thou art the disciple whom Jesus loved, obtain for me the piety, the innocency, and the holiness which he looketh for in me, who is the flower and offspring of that fair Lily, of whom thou wast the chosen and faithful guardian.

O all ye holy Apostles, ye brethren and friends of Jesus my Spouse, obtain for me that I may be united to him by an unchangeable love.

O St. Stephen, chosen to be the first martyr, obtain for me a yearning desire to suffer martyrdom for the love of Jesus, that to me too he may disclose himself, who upheld thee with his consolations when thou wast dying for him.

O St. Laurence, warrior invincible, obtain for me that love stronger than death, which enabled thee to triumph over the fiery torment.

O St. George, thou flower of martyrs, obtain for me an unconquerable courage in the service of my God.

O all ye holy Martyrs, obtain for me a patience mingled with sweetness and gentleness, so that I may be always ready to lay down my body and my life for the love of Jesus.

O St. Gregory, thou apostolic pastor, obtain for me that I may abide firm, unwavering, and ever-watchful in the holy vows of religion unto my life's end.

O St. Augustin, thou mirror and true image of the Church, obtain for me that I may live entirely and alone for God and his Church.

O St. Benedict, thou august founder of all the whole religious life; O thou friend of God, and my father, obtain for me such energy and constancy in the spiritual life, that I may be admitted with thee to the reward of life everlasting.

O all ye holy Confessors, obtain for me that I be clothed with praise and beauty,[1] so that my whole life and my every action may set forth the mercy which the Lord showeth unto all the works of his hands.

O St. Catherine, who didst receive the wound of divine love, obtain for me that I may despise all the things of earth, and long for Jesus alone.

O St. Agnes, thou who dost follow the Lamb in thy delicate beauty, who dost exult in being a captive in the bonds of his love, in having received the sweet pledge of his faithfulness, and in being brought into his secret chamber, obtain for me that I may be inflamed like thee with love of Jesus my Spouse.

O St. Mary Magdalen, who didst love Jesus

[1] Ps. xcv. 6.

so truly and so well, obtain for me that I may carefully observe all the obligations of holy religion.

O all ye holy Virgins and Widows, obtain for me such a growth in the holiness which beseems the spiritual life, that I may bring forth fruit a hundredfold.

O all ye Saints and Elect of God, obtain for me so great fidelity to all the duties of holy religion, that I be accounted worthy to reach with you that home of everlasting life, where is unmingled joy, where God is all in all.

O Lord, forgive me all my sins and negligences, and vouchsafe to supply, from the merits of thy most perfect life, all that is faulty in my most miserable life.

Deliver me, O Lord, from all faint-heartedness, from all perturbation of spirit, from all perversity and sensuality of heart, from all blindness and barrenness of soul, from all neglect and lukewarmness in the spiritual life.

By the bowels of thy fatherly compassion, give me understanding; fashion me thyself after the true spirit of the religious life, which I now profess in thy presence; for I know well that, apart from thee, I am nothing, I know nothing, nor can do anything.

By thy Mother Mary, I beseech thee lead me in the undefiled way, that I may ever be pleasing to thee in body and in soul.

Behold, I, thine unworthy daughter, who, by my sins and wanderings, have almost lost my right to the name of daughter, now put all my trust in thy fatherly compassion; I

implore thee of thy mercy to look upon me, and to blot out all my iniquities.

O Lord, hear me.

Grant, I humbly beseech thee, that I may bring with me into this state of religion a firm and unwavering resolve, a heart tender with compunction, a decided will, and a body the apt and docile instrument of my soul.

We beseech thee to hear us.

Vouchsafe to pour forth upon me the grace, the attraction, and the love of the spiritual life.

We beseech thee to hear us.

Grant that I may perfectly renounce the world, and cleave to thee with an unlimited devotion of heart.

We beseech thee to hear us.

Enable me faithfully to fulfil all the obligations of holy religion, and grant me to persevere to the end in the resolve I this day form.

We beseech thee to hear us.

Vouchsafe to grant to us all who serve thee in this holy house, oneness of spirit in the bond of charity and of peace; and after this life, do thou bring us to the reward thou hast promised, to the enjoyment of thy glory.

We beseech thee to hear us.

Vouchsafe with the infinite might of thy Godhead to absolve me from all my sins, to strengthen and to confirm me in this my holy resolution, to look favourably upon me in thine infinite goodness, and to hear and grant all these my petitions.

We beseech thee to hear us.

O Jesus, Son of the living God, thou alone

knowest the intent and aim of my longing desire; make me after thine own heart.

We beseech thee to hear us.

O Lamb of God, uphold me with thy right hand in the way wherein I walk, that I may not stumble.

O Lamb of God, grant that what I have begun in thy name, I may faithfully perform by the help of thy grace.

O Lamb of God, let not my manifold sins close thine ears to my cry, but let thy mercy hear and answer all these my petitions.

O Christ, hear me; and in the hour of my death be my joy and my salvation.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER

O GOD, who in thy wisdom dost implant all virtues in our souls, and in thy faithfulness dost nurture them, make me, I beseech thee, all unworthy as I am, a grain of good seed cast into good ground, that I may spring up vigorous and strong in holy religion, and bring forth a thousandfold the fruit of a perfect life, and may persevere faithfully and courageously in thy holy service, unto my life's end. Amen.

Invoke the divine Wisdom and implore his aid, saying the following response :

℟. Send forth wisdom, O Lord, from the throne of thy majesty that it may abide with

me; and deign to concur with me in all my undertakings:* that I may always know how to please thee in all things.

℣. Give me, O Lord, that wisdom which directs thine eternal counsels:* that I may always know how to please thee in all things.

Offer to the Lord the register of your profession which you have signed, and say :

O JESUS, most beloved, my eager desire is to follow with thee this rule of love, that my life may be renewed in thee and spent in thee. Put my whole life in the keeping of thy Holy Spirit, that I may at all times be ready to fulfil thy commands. Make my actions conformable to thine; strengthen and stablish me in thy love and in thy peace. Enlighten my understanding with the light of thy charity. Do thou alone teach me, guide me, and form me, in the most secret feelings of my heart. Draw up my whole being into thine with such energy that I may be truly buried in thee; that in this deep union with thee I may be lost even to myself, and thou alone know the place of my rest; that love may be as a seal upon this blessed sepulchre, and bind me therein to thee with a bond which nothing can weaken or break for evermore. Amen.

Turn now towards our Lord, and consider what is the first act of obedience which his love enjoins on you.

MY well-beloved crieth unto me, "Put me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death."[1]

Prepare yourself to enter with firm resolve into the way of fair love.

℟. I will love thee, O Lord, my strength: * for thou, O Lord, art my strong rock, my refuge, and my Redeemer.

℣. I will praise the Lord and call upon his holy name; so shall I be delivered from mine enemies: * for thou, O Lord, art my strong rock, my refuge, and my Redeemer.

Receive anew the yoke of the holy Rule which was laid upon you.

O HOLY Father, receive me in thy most tender and fatherly love, that, having finished the race which for love of thee I have begun to run, I may receive thee as the everlasting prize of my course.

O most loving Jesus, receive me into thy sweetest brotherhood; bear with me the burden of the day and the consuming heat; be thou my consolation in toil, my companion and my guide in all my weary wandering.

O Holy Spirit, receive me into thy most merciful love; be thou the master and teacher of my whole life and my soul's most tender friend.

[1] Cant. viii. 6.

Prostrate yourself before the Lord, and say :

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Psalm, Miserere, p. 60.

O FATHER, whose love knoweth neither measure nor end, behold me at thy feet. My sins have separated between me and thee; have mercy on me according to thy great mercy. Take away the hedge of my life past, and throw down the wall thereof,[1] that wall which separateth me from thee. Draw me to thee with force so mighty that I may henceforward and evermore follow thee lovingly and willingly, ravished and borne onwards by the sweetness of thy love. Amen.

O merciful Jesus, I can indeed desire and resolve, but such is the frailty of my human nature, that I find not how to accomplish what is good;[2] wherefore do thou aid me with thine almighty grace. Turn my whole soul towards thee with the mighty impulse of thy love. Then shall I run in the way of thy commandments, and not be weary; then shall I cleave inseparably to thee; and thou wilt be with me, O my Master, my succour and my strength in the great work I have taken upon me for love of thy love. Amen.

[1] Isa. v. 5.
[2] Rom. vii. 18.

Here receive in spirit the holy habit, saying :

COME unto me, O Jesus, my princely, peerless Love! I am but a dry and a withered root, which thy look alone hath transformed into a lily, which thy right hand hath planted in the lowly valley of holy humility, beside the still waters of thy overflowing love, where flow in rich abundance the streams of thy indulgence and compassion. Come, O thou gracious Sun of dawn, and by the unction of thy Holy Spirit cause this withered stalk, apt image of my utter nothingness and helplessness, to bloom and flower anew. Grant that I may now at length put off the old man with his works, and be clothed upon with the new man which is created after God, in justice and holiness and truth. Amen.

℟. The world and all the pomps thereof have I despised for Jesus Christ my Lord: *whom I have seen, whom I have loved; in whom I have trusted, to whom I have given my love.

℣. My heart hath uttered a good word: I speak my works to the divine King:* whom I have seen, whom I have loved; in whom I have trusted, to whom I have given my love.

Abandon yourself to the love excited within you by the goodness of the Lord.

WHAT have I henceforth to do with the world, O my Jesus? What is there in heaven that I can desire but thee

alone? Thee do I love, thee do I desire; my heart thirsteth after thee, my soul craveth thee alone. When I think upon thee, O my beloved, my well-beloved, my heart faileth within me. Set me in the sevenfold heat of the furnace of thy love. Unite me so closely to thee in this life, that when my soul shall leave the body, I may have already found in thee my supreme and everlasting bliss. My soul loveth thee, my heart yearneth after thee, my whole being hangeth on thy love, my life hath forsaken me to go after thee. O Jesus, most loved of all who are loved, my heart hath said unto thee, and saith evermore, Thou art my dearest, choicest treasure, my true and only joy, my undecaying bliss, my better part, the one only object of my soul's love and desire.

Then go to Holy Communion and cast yourself entirely into God, that you may no longer live but in him alone.

WHAT am I, O my God, thou life of my soul? Alas, what an infinite distance there is between thee and me! I am but a grain of dust, which the wind scattereth. Send down upon me the glowing breath of thy love. May thy Holy Spirit, like a mighty whirlwind, lift me from earth, and cast me upon thy merciful and loving breast, and there do thou deign to receive me. There shall I be truly detached from myself; there shall I die to myself, to live in thee alone.

O my dearest, fairest Love, there shall I lose myself, to find myself no more; so that, even as a grain of dust is borne away and leaves no void, so no trace may evermore be found of me. Transform me so entirely into thine intense love, that all my imperfection may be consumed, and that I may have no life apart from thee. Grant that I may lose myself in thee so completely, that throughout eternity I may be unable to find myself but in thee alone. Amen.

Abandon yourself to your longing desire to be made perfect in the Lord.

WHAT am I, O my God, thou Love of my heart? What mournful unlikeness to thee! I am but an almost imperceptible drop, and thou art the great and shoreless ocean of ineffable and most tender love. O Love, Love, open to me thy pitying heart. Let the water-floods of thy fatherly goodness overwhelm me; break up the fountains of the great deep of thine infinite goodness, and let it swallow me up, that I may be absorbed and lost in the ocean of thine infinite love. Thy love is impetuous as a mighty flood; may I sink and disappear beneath its waters, even as a feeble spark is lost in the immensity of the sea. Let me die, borne along by the torrent of thy boundless mercy, even as a burning coal is quenched beneath the wild waves of a swollen river. Thy love droppeth down as the fruitful rain; grant that

it may penetrate to my inmost soul. Thy love is a potion; let it quickly take my life away; let it accomplish within me the designs of thy merciful wisdom by inflicting upon me a glorious death, even death from excess of love, that love of thee which is the soul's true life. Let me lose my fleeting life in thine, which is eternal, O my Love, thou God of my life. Amen.

Express your desire to be buried and lost in the bosom of the living God.

WHAT am I, O my God, thou glorious object of my love? Alas, alas! I am only the refuse of thy creatures, and still thou art within me the principle and ground of an unbounded trust; for in thee is hidden, in all its infinity of wealth, the treasure wherewith all my losses shall be compensated. O Love, Love, ove, accumulate upon me all the riches of thine indulgent goodness. Overwhelm me beneath the weight of thine infinite clemency and compassion. May my last breath blend and be lost in the breath of thy divine Spirit; may I lay me down to my last sleep beneath the shadow of thy love spread over me as a veil. My only life consists in tasting and seeing how gracious and how sweet thou art; let it be breathed forth in thy bosom; let me go forth from myself and pass sweetly into thee, O thou who art my chosen delight; let me faint and die in thy embrace, and may the mystic kiss of thy love be the seal upon my sepulchre.

In this sepulchre of love, wrap me round with thy priceless redemption as with a winding-sheet; embalm me with the fragrant spices of thy precious death; place me in thy pierced and riven heart, as in a tomb of costliest marble. May thy look of love cover me and shelter me as the stone of this blissful tomb; and may I thus remain beneath thine eye throughout eternity. For there, O my well-beloved, there shall I feel myself blissfully entombed beneath the shadow of thy dear paternal love; there will I rest for ever on the deathless memory of thine unutterable tenderness. O irresistible Love, let this frail flesh sink and fail and die of the ecstasy of thy coming. O Love, who art also Life, let my life be breathed forth in thee. O Love, gentlest, most consuming fire, let my being be consumed in thy glowing heat, and may my soul rest evermore in the ineffable light which streams everlastingly from thy loveliest face. Amen.

Here repeat in thanksgiving the Magnificat:

MY soul doth magnify: the Lord.
And my spirit hath rejoiced: in God my Saviour.

For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath done great things unto me: and holy is his name.

And his mercy is from generation to generation: unto them that fear him.

He hath showed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble.

He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He hath upholden his servant Israel: being mindful of his mercy.

As he spake unto our fathers: to Abraham and his seed for ever.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

Add the following prayer :

O GOD, who art the Author of my being and the principle of life to my soul; thou who art the object of my most tender love, my Father, my Spouse, and my Defence; I offer thee as my only treasure all the love I have, and I pour it into the glowing furnace of thy Holy Spirit, into the refining fire whose flames are fed by thy love. For love of thee, O thou dearer far than the sons of men, for thee and for thy love, I choose from henceforward all that is hardest and most repugnant to nature; for thy love is infinitely above whatever charms this life can offer me.

O my well-beloved, thou hast the might of a God, and I lean upon thy goodness; cover me then for the combat with the whole armour of thy Spirit; help me to bring to naught all the devices of the enemy. Consume in the flame of thine inextinguishable charity, consume even the very root of every-

thing which is not entirely, absolutely thine; so that, aided by a knowledge of the love wherewith thou condescendest to love me, and drawn by its life-giving sweetness, I may at length begin to love thee in return. O teach me, help me to love thee, thou who art my love and my strength. May I bear with gladness the sweet yoke and the light burden of thy love; may I fulfil, under thy guidance and with thine aid, O my well-beloved, all the obligations of thy service; and may my days of toil seem short and few for the greatness of my love.

May the genial freshness of the breath of thy divine Spirit assuage for me the heat of the day and lighten its burden. Deign to penetrate and pervade all the actions of my life with the help of thine almighty love, so that my soul may glorify thee by serving thee without weariness as long as I live; that my spirit may exult in thee, my God and my salvation; and that all my thoughts and all my works may be acts of praise and thanksgiving to thee. Amen.

Then commend yourself to God by saying, Nunc dimittis:

NOW dost thou dismiss thy servant, O Lord,
in peace: according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen: thy salvation.
Which thou hast prepared: before the face of all people.
A light to enlighten the gentiles: and the glory of thy people Israel.

And then conclude, as follows :

NOW, O my Love, my King, and my God ! Now, O my Jesus, take me beneath the protection of thy divine Heart. There thou wilt unite me to thee by thy love, that I may live to thee alone.

Now plunge me into the vast and deep sea of thy mercy; give me into the care of thine immeasurable pity. Cast me into the glowing furnace of thy love, and leave me therein till all my dross be burnt away. At the hour of death give me over to the tender providence of thy fatherly charity. Then, O my Salvation, thou wilt comfort me with the sense of thy ravishing presence; thou wilt gladden me with the one sweetest thought that I have been redeemed and purchased by thee. Call me, then, with thy loving, thrilling voice, and receive me into the embrace of thy indulgent goodness. Draw me to thee with the sweetest breath of thy Holy Spirit, and absorb me into thee. Grant that I may sink into thy divine Essence, in the eternal kiss of a union which can know no end; and grant me then to see thee, to possess thee, to enjoy thee for ever; for thou hast wounded my heart with thy love, O Jesus, fairer, dearer than the sons of men. Amen.

FIFTH EXERCISE

TO ENKINDLE IN THE SOUL THE LOVE OF GOD

THE aim of this Exercise is to excite in the Christian soul the dispositions necessary for fulfilling with the utmost possible perfection the first and great commandment, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*. The seraphic soul of St. Gertrude reveals itself therein without reserve; and it is scarcely possible to hear her express the transports of her love for the Supreme Good without being moved, and without asking ourselves how we fulfil the obligation of loving the infinitely good God, who has condescended to reveal himself as our last End, and to draw us to himself in ways so manifold and so marvellous.

In this lofty lyric the depth of the thoughts is as striking as the beauty of the poetry in which they are expressed, and St. Gertrude is always and unconsciously sublime. But in her school we have other work than to admire merely. It is no barren speculation that she brings before us. She teaches us by her example how we ought to love God, who is our first Beginning and our last End—God, who hath first loved us—God, our Mediator and our Redeemer, the Spouse of our souls.

And if by reason of our frailty we cannot follow her to the heights whereon she already possesses the Object of her love in the most

intimate union to which the creature can attain on earth, let us at least gather up the crumbs which fall from the table of this queenly bride of the great King. Her transcendent holiness enabled her to love more than others; but there is not one among us who is not called to love God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength.

FIFTH EXERCISE

To Enkindle in the Soul the Love of God

When you wish to employ yourself in the exercise of love, first of all purge your heart of every irregular affection; remove all impediments and banish all vain images; choose a day, and set apart a fitting time in that day—that is to say, three hours, which you will divide between the morning, midday, and the evening—and employ these hours with the intention of making reparation for your sin in having never loved the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Maintain yourself in union with God by praying, with all your love, all your devotion and your full intention, as though Jesus your Spouse, who is present in your soul, were visibly present to your bodily eyes.

MORNING EXERCISE

In order to dispose your heart to go forth to meet your God, begin with the following prayer:

O GOD, my God: to thee do I watch at break of day.

For thee my soul hath thirsted: for thee my flesh is consumed.

In this barren land, where there is no way and no water: so in the sanctuary have I come before thee, to see thy power and thy glory.

PRAYER

O GOD, who art love, thou alone art my true sufficing love. Thou art my Saviour, dear to me above all; my hope and my consummate joy, my supreme and all-transcending good. In the morning thou shalt hear my voice, O my God and my dearest love; in the morning I will stand before thee and will look up unto thee, for thou art uncloying sweetness and charm inexhaustible. Thou art my soul's thirst, thou alone canst allay the hunger of my heart: and yet the more I taste of thee, and more doth my hunger crave; the more deeply I drink of thee, the more eagerly do I thirst for thee.

O God my love, the day when I shall see thee as thou art will be the brightest, fairest, gladdest of days; that unending day spent in the courts of the house of the Lord, which is above thousands; that day for which sighs my soul, which thou hast ransomed for thyself. O when wilt thou satisfy my longing by giving me to see thy face? My soul languishes and faints at thought of the delights which are in thee. I have chosen to be an abject in thy house, O my God, that I may with fuller hope aspire to see thy beauty and thy glory. O God my love, to see thee is to feel the soul sunk and lost in thee; to cleave unto thee is to be united to thine essence by the bond of a divine espousal. O thou my soul's calm untroubled Light! O dawn of morning, soft-gleaming with thy beauteous light, become in me the

perfect day; shine on me with such splendour that in thy light I too may see light, and that so my night may be clear as the day. O balmy dawn of morning, grant that all which is not thee may for love of thee be to me as nothing, as a vain thing. Visit me early in the morning,[1] and in a moment transform me wholly into thee.

O my Love, who dost not only enlighten but deify, come unto me in all thy might; come and gently melt my whole being. May all that is of me be destroyed utterly; may I wholly pass into thee, so that I may no more find myself in time, but may be already and most intimately united to thee for all eternity.

O my Love, thou art that peerless beauty, thou that sovereign splendour, on which none upon earth can gaze, except as veiled by the wings of seraphim. O when shall I be renewed by the vision of thine incomparable loveliness? O thou morning star, who dost shine forth in thy supreme majesty with a radiance all divine, when shall thy light enlighten me?

O beauty so worthy of love, when wilt thou make me wholly thine? O wouldst thou but send down on me one least and faintest ray. Then should I have a foretaste of thy sweetness, and anticipate the blessed inheritance which awaits me. O Flower of flowers, bend down thy face on me, that I may for one brief moment feast my eyes upon thee.

[1] Job vii. 18.

Thou art the mirror of the Holy Trinity, whom the dwellers in heaven see face to face, but we here far away only darkly, and with the cleansed eye of faith. O sprinkle me with the waters of thy holiness, and I shall be cleansed; grant unto my heart that it may but touch thy consummate purity, and so shall I be whiter than snow. Let the greatness of thy love triumph over all; let the infinite sanctity of thy merits wrap me all around, and let not the absence of all beauty in me lead thee to spurn me from thee.

Look down upon me, and teach me to know thee. Thou hast first loved me; it is thou who hast chosen me, and not I who have first chosen thee. Thou art he who of his own accord runneth towards his thirsting creature; and on thy kingly brow gleams the fair splendour of the everlasting light.

Show me thy countenance, and let me gaze upon thy beauty. How mild and full of charms is that face, all radiant with the rosy light of the dawn of the divine Sun! Thy freshness speaks of him who never groweth old, for he is the Alpha and the Omega.[1] Eternity looks forth from thine eyes; and I know thee who thou art, my Saviour and my God, by the splendours which clothe thee round about. In thee truth, manifold in its converging rays, and love, beauteous in its fervid glow, meet, and are one. The fragrance of immortal life breathes forth from thee, and thy sacred lips drop down milk and honey.[2] How fair thou

[1] Apoc. i. 8. [2] Cant. iv. 11.

art, O Love, very essence of God! How dost thou draw all hearts, and compel them to wonder and adoration! How dear the delights we taste in thee! Thou hast the highest place upon thy throne, as the queen of the heavenly court; and thou art filled to overflowing with all the riches of the sovereign Trinity. Thou art eternally united to God as his spouse, and the tie which binds thee to the Son of God can never be broken.

O Love, when the shadows of evening fall upon my life, deign to shine forth on me as the morning dawn; and when I lie down in death give me to draw eternal life from thee. When I go forth from this land of exile lead me up thyself to the marriage-supper of the Lamb; bring me to the Bridegroom and true Friend of my soul. Do thou, O Love eternal, unite me for ever to him, that none may take me from his divine embrace.

O Love, thou key of David,[1] open to me then the Holy of Holies. Make me to enter in, that I may without delay behold the God of gods in Sion, even him whose face of love my heart pineth to see.

MIDDAY EXERCISE

At noon you will beseech your most loving Spouse, who is the Sun of justice, to warm your tepid soul with the beams of his ardent love, so that the coal of love divine may never more be

[1] Apoc. iii. 7.

extinguished on the altar of your heart. Begin with these verses of Psalm xvii.:

I WILL love thee: O Lord, my strength.
O my God, thou art my strong rock: my defender, and my salvation.

PRAYER

O LOVE, thou art my first and fairest flower, the pledge of the plighted faith of my Betrothed, and the dowry of mine espousals. For love of thee I have despised and forsaken the world, and have put from me all its joys, that I might aspire to thine alliance.

Vouchsafe to admit me to thy tenderness, most intimate love; my heart languisheth for thy kiss divine.[1] Open to me the sanctuary of thine infinite tenderness; my soul thirsteth for thine eternal embrace.

Prepare for me the feast of thine abounding mercy; call me to the table where thou dost impart all thy sweetness; set before me the exquisite food of thine everlasting forgiveness, which alone can give peace to my soul.

Let us sit down together at thy banquet, O my sovereign good! Thou dost abound and superabound in all manner of riches, and thou dost communicate thyself to thy creatures in ways ineffable.

Be thou thyself my food. How can the spark live and glow far from the fire that gave it being? Or how can the drop of water abide far from the spring from whence it was taken?

[1] Cant. i. 1.

Let thy longed-for flame consume my whole substance, seize upon my whole soul. Thus let thine almighty munificence deal with this grain of dust.

O Love, O noontide, whose ardours are so soothing, thou art the hour of sacred rest, and the unruffled peace I taste in thee is all my delight. This hour of rest, so longed for, is filled with thy divine presence, and my soul is inebriated with the serene beauty of the face of my Beloved. O thou whom my soul loveth, thou who art my chosen and my elect above all creatures, tell me, show me, where thou feedest thy flock, where thou liest to rest in the midday.[1] My heart kindles with rapture at thought of thy tranquil rest at noon.

O Love, my one hope, my sure trust, is to rest beneath the beloved shadow of thy goodness. Thine Israel doth dwell confidently in the bosom of thy peace; and my soul doth pine within me for this sacred rest, this high eternal Sabbath.

O Love, to enjoy thee is the union of the soul with the divine Word, the closest union with God. To commune with thee is to be plunged into thy very essence, and to become partaker thereof; to enjoy thee is to become one with God. For thou art the Peace which passeth all understanding, and thou the sure way along which the bride moves to the object of her humble hope.

O that it were given me, miserable as I am, to rest but for one moment beneath the shadow

[1] Cant. i. 6.

of thy love! Then wouldst thou strengthen my heart with one of the thrilling, consoling words of thy mouth; then should my soul hear from thee the glad assurance: "I am thy salvation; the sanctuary of my heart is open to thee."

O compassionate Love, why hast thou loved a creature so defiled and so covered with shame, but that thou hast willed to render it all fair in thee? O thou delicate flower of the Virgin Mary, thy goodness and thy tender mercy have won and ravished my heart.

Let me not be confounded in my hope; but grant that my soul may find its rest in thee. Nothing have I met so to be desired, nothing known so to be loved, nothing have I seen so to be longed for, as to be pressed to thy heart, O Love, and to rest beneath the shadow of the wings of my Jesus; to dwell with him in the tent of his divinest love.

O Love, my glorious noontide, to take my rest in thee gladly would I die a thousand deaths. Turn then, O my supreme good, thy beloved face towards me.

O that it were given me to come so near to thee that I might no longer be near thee only, but in thee. Beneath thy genial ray, O Sun of justice, all the flowers of virtue would spring forth from me, who am but dust and ashes. Then would my soul, rendered fruitful by thee, my Master and my Spouse, bring forth noble fruit unto perfection. Then should I be led forth from this valley of sorrow, and admitted to behold thy face, so long, so wistfully longed for; and then would it be my

everlasting happiness to think that thou hast not abhorred, O thou spotless Mirror, to unite thyself to a sinner like me.

O Charity, O Love, at the hour of my death thou wilt sustain me with thy words, more gladdening far than choicest wine; and thy lips, sweeter than the honeycomb, shall distil on me their consolations. Thou wilt then be my way, my unobstructed way, that I may wander no more nor stray. Thou wilt aid me then, O Love, thou queen of heaven; thou wilt clear my way before me to those fair and fertile pastures hidden in the divine wilderness, and my soul shall be inebriate with bliss; for there shall I see the face of the Lamb, my Spouse and my God. Let everything that hath being and life say Amen!

EVENING EXERCISE

At evening cast yourself, all tremulous and languishing with desire of the eternal vision of the divine Lamb, into the arms of Jesus your Spouse, even as the thrifty bee darts on a fragrant flower. Place yourself on his heart, so full of love; implore him to bestow on you that heavenly kiss whose virtue is such that it will cause you to die to yourself, and pass into God through this blissful death, aud make you one spirit with him.[1] *And express your eager thirst in the words of the Psalm:*

AS the hart panteth after the fountains of waters: so my soul panteth after thee, O God.

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 17.

My soul hath thirsted after God, the strong, the living: when shall I come and appear before the face of God?

My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said unto me daily: *Where is thy God?*

PRAYER

O LOVE, whose kiss divine hath such sweetness, thou art that fountain after which my thirsting soul doth pant. Thine are all the transports of my soul. O thou boundless, shoreless Ocean, why delayest thou to receive into thy fulness this feeble, tremulous drop? All the desire of my soul, impetuous even in its calm assurance, is to come forth from myself and to enter into thee.

Open me thy much-loved heart as a sure city of refuge. As for my heart, it is no longer mine; for thou, my beloved treasure, hast long since taken it and keepest it in thee. Of thee alone it liveth, and thou hast communicated to it, frail and wretched though it is, thine own divine essence. My soul is melted into thine with the glowing ardour of its love, and liveth for thee alone.

How ineffable is this union! How infinitely far this close familiarity with thee is above all other manner of life! How enrapturing is thy fragrance! What fulness of bliss to breathe the peace divine, the largeness of mercy, there is in thee! Thou art the rich and overflowing treasure of manifold consolation. O love, thou who art queen in the court of heaven, bring me

into thy mystic storerooms,[1] and give me to drink of the wine thou keepest therein. For all the vessels which contain it are filled with God, and the Holy Spirit filleth them even to the brim.

O that I could obtain even here below my soul's desire, its one intensest longing, that it might at length turn to thee alone, and that thou mightest bid it live again with the gentle kiss of thy mercy. O my chosen, cherished good, let me clasp thee with my soul's very inmost being; let me impress on thee my reverent kiss, that so I may be united to thee and cleave indissolubly to thee.

O Love, O Holy Spirit, who art in the most holy Trinity that ineffable kiss which is the mighty unity of the Father and the Son; thou art also that kiss, the cause of our salvation, which the eternal Son hath given to our weak nature.

O sweetest kiss, let me not be deprived of thee for that I am but vile and worthless dust. O Love, lavish upon me thy caresses until I become one with God. Give me to feel how sweet it is to be united to thee, and to find in thee the living God the much-loved object of my reverent tenderness.

O Love, who art God, thou art my best beloved possession. Without thee neither earth nor heaven could excite in me one hope, nor draw forth one desire. Thou art my one true inheritance, my one and only expectation, the one end towards which my being tends.

[1] Cant. i. 3.

O Love, vouchsafe to effect and perfect within me that union which thou thyself desirest; may it be the end, the crown, and consummation of my being. O show me, when the shades of evening fall thick around me, this covenant of espousal which my soul now ratifieth with thee. In the countenance of my God thy light beameth soft and fair as the evening star; O thou fair and solemn Evening, let me see thy ray when my eye shall close in death. Be thou the end of my weary wistful exile; in thee may I lay me down and rest in sweet refreshing sleep.

O Love, who art very God, amidst the crash and ruin of earth open to my soul a sure refuge in thee. Cover it over as with a garment, encompass it with thy kingly pomp, that I may come and appear before the eternal Bridegroom with the wedding garment and the dowry of mine espousals.

O Love, set on the hour of my death the seal of thy tenderness; impress upon it the stamp of thy boundless unfailing mercy. May thine abounding blessing go with me, and in its strength may I triumph over every foe and every hindrance, till I come to thee, to joy which fadeth not, to a possession which hath no end.

O Love, thou much-loved Evening-tide, at the hour of my death cheer and gladden me with the sight of thee. At that dread moment let the sacred flame which burneth evermore in thy divine essence, consume all the stains of my mortal life.

O thou my calm and peaceful Evening, when the evening-time of my life shall come give me to sleep in thee in tranquil sleep, and to taste that blissful rest which thou hast prepared in thyself for them that love thee. With thy serene, enchanting look vouchsafe to order all things, and prepare all things for my everlasting espousal. Cover my poverty with the riches of thy goodness, and hide the wretchedness of my unworthy life; let my soul dwell with confidence in the delights of thy charity.

O Love, be thou unto me an eventide so bright and calm that my ravished soul may bid a loving farewell to its body, and return to God who gave it, and rest in peace beneath thy beloved shadow. Say unto me then with thy thrilling voice, sweeter far than sweetest music: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go forth to meet him, and be united to him closely and for ever; go, taste the joy of gazing throughout eternity on his glorious face."

Happy, thrice happy the soul whose exile shall thus end in love. Alas, alas! how long shall my hope be deferred? How long shall my weary exile last? O when shall the glad word fall on my transported ears: "Now, now it is over and gone"? Then shall the glory of my Spouse and my King be revealed unto me and shine upon me, bringing with it joy and bliss unending. When shall I at length behold the face of my Jesus, so fair, so eagerly longed for, for whom my soul is athirst, with whose beauty it is wounded and

smitten? Then shall I be satisfied with the torrent of delights yet in store for me in the treasures of the Godhead. Then shall I see and gaze upon thee my God, my sweetest Love, for longing love of whom my heart and my soul are faint.

O when wilt thou show thyself unto me, that I may see thee as thou art, and drink of thee with rapture, thou Fountain of Life and my God? Then shall I slake my burning thirst, then shall I be inebriated with those living waters, whose fair source is the excellent beauty of him towards whom my soul aspires.

O thou beauty most ravishing, when wilt thou fulfil this yearning desire? Then shall I go into that wondrous tabernacle where mine eye shall see God. But I am still at the portal, and my heart pineth and moaneth by reason of the length of its exile. When wilt thou consummate my bliss by showing thyself to me arrayed in all thy loveliness? Then shall mine eyes behold my Jesus, and the Spouse of my soul will kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; yea, even now am I his in my heart's impetuous longing, in the going forth of my whole soul after him.

O who will free me from the anguish of my weary pilgrimage? Who will take my feet out of the snares of this world? When shall I quit this wretched body, to see thee without a veil or cloud between, O my God, my Love, thou Star of stars? In thee alone, O my beloved, shall I be set free from the temptations of this abode of death. When I drop this

garment of flesh, I shall be in thee, O thou God who hast so loved me. Then shall I be in safety, transported with unending joy, there where I shall see thee in very truth, no longer in types and figures, but face to face.

O thou Fount of everlasting light, draw me away to thee, into the ocean of thy divine essence, whence came forth the word which spoke me into being. There shall I know even as I am known, and love even as I am loved; and I shall see thee, O my God, see thee as thou art, with a clear vision, a gladness, and a possession, which will be my bliss for evermore.

AT MATINS

On this day, thus set apart for the exercise of divine love, you will offer your heart to the Lord seven times, in order to quicken and to excite your love of his sacred Heart. And first of all, at the hour of Matins, implore our Lord, who is the sovereign Master, to teach you, by the unction of his Holy Spirit, how to love him, to receive you as his scholar, and to exercise you unceasingly in the virtue of love. Say therefore :

TO thee I flee for refuge, O Lord Jesus Christ; teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God.

O Love, most skilful of masters; O my Lord, who art high above the heavens, and deeper than the mighty deep; thou whose wondrous wisdom is the bliss of all that live; thou who sittest above the cherubim, and lookest down

in thine infinite love on the lowliest things in heaven and in earth; thou who gatherest little children, and dost impart to them thy saving knowledge; let me not be deprived of thy teaching, though I be but the lowest refuse of thy creatures; but deign to quicken me with thy living doctrine. My soul desires above all things that thou wouldst adopt me as thy child, and hold me as thine own possession. O my Love, from this moment begin to put forth on me thine authority as my master; detach me from myself, that I may seek nothing but to love thee with a fervent love. O Love, possess and sanctify and fill my whole soul with thyself. Amen.

AT PRIME

At the hour of Prime implore our Lord to bring you into his school of love, that therein you may learn to know and to love Jesus only.

BEHOLD, I am thy servant, my most loving Jesus; give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

O God, who art love, with what tender care dost thou gather and cherish beneath thy wings thy feeble chickens! Open to me, I most earnestly implore thee—open to me the school wherein thou teachest holy love, that I may hear thy sweetest lessons, and receive from thee a soul which shall not be good alone, but holy and perfect in thy truth.

O Love, plunge my spirit into the very spring and source of thy love, that I may

become thy wise and understanding child. Be thou my Father, thou my Master and my Teacher in the truth. Beneath thy fatherly benediction and in the fire of thy love, purge my understanding from all the dross of sin, that it may be rendered fit to receive the glowing flame of thy teachings, O Love; and that thy holy Spirit, the author and spring of all uprightness, may dwell and rule with sovereign sway within my soul now and for evermore. Amen.

AT TIERCE

At Tierce implore our Lord to engrave upon your heart, in the living letters of his Spirit, the law of his divine love, that you may remain inseparably united to him.

O JESUS, full of love, may all my thoughts, my words, and my actions, be directed to keep thy holy laws evermore. How near art thou, O God of love, to them that seek thy face! How sweet and how fair to those who have found thee! O that thou wouldst deign to open to me now the wondrous alphabet of thy love, and to teach my ravished heart to read therein. Teach me to know by my own experience what is the glorious and sovereign Alpha of fair love. Suffer me not to languish in ignorance of the Beta of thy kingly wisdom, that fruitful letter by which is signified the life thou givest unto all that live. Point out to me, with thy divine finger, thy Holy Spirit, all and each of the letters of thy love, that the

eye of my soul may be purged and cleansed by thy truth, so that I may penetrate into thy most secret and hidden delights, and may search out, and read and learn and know and possess, so far as is possible in this mortal life, all the letters of that heavenly alphabet.

Teach me, by the aid of thy Holy Spirit, the Tau of finished perfection, and lead me up to the Omega of perfect consummation. Grant me so perfectly to learn, even in this life, thy handwriting of most tender love, that there be not in me one Iota void of thy love, and that I be not delayed by my ignorance when thou shalt call me to behold thee everlastingly in thyself, O God my love, thou fairest object of my heart's affections. Amen.

AT SEXT

At Sext beseech our Lord to enable you to make such progress in the art of his love, that you may be the apt and ready instrument of that love, prepared to fulfil all its commands, so that you may become wholly conformed to the heart of God.

O JESUS, my well-beloved, my Lawgiver and my King, pour forth on me thy sweetest benediction, that I may go from virtue to virtue, till I see thee, the God of gods, in Sion.

He who loveth thee not, O God who art love, is like a child which hath not learned to use its tongue. He alone grows and unfolds all his powers who cleaves to thee alone, and

gives all his love irrevocably and for ever. Leave me not to myself in the school of thy love, like a callow chicken which is still a prisoner in the egg; but grant that I may, day by day, grow in all virtues, in thee, through thee, and with thee. I cannot rest content with knowing how to spell thee out; my ever-increasing desire is to know thee in thyself; to love thee fervently with a heart not only charmed by thee, but understanding thee; to cleave inseparably to thee; that I may begin at length to live no longer in myself, but in thee and for thee alone. Wherefore, O Love, give me now to know thee in truth, and set up thine abode in my heart in all holiness. Amen.

AT NONE

At the hour of None you will beseech our Lord, who is King of kings, to deign to receive you into the chosen chivalry of his love, and to teach you to bear under his command his easy yoke and his light burden, so that you may henceforward follow Jesus your Lord, bearing your cross after him and cleaving unto him with an inseparable love. To this end you will say :

THOU art my hope, O Lord, my protector and my refuge; thou art with me in all my tribulations.

O God who art love, he who shall be found ready and courageous in the works of thy love will be admitted into thy kingly presence for all eternity. O love, thou queen of queens, let it now be my privilege to swear fealty to

thee in the hallowed chivalry of love. Teach me to put out my hand to strong things,[1] to attempt in thee and through thee such exploits as may prove my fidelity to thee, and to bring them to a happy issue by putting forth my valour, and by enduring hardness. Gird on me the sword of the Holy Spirit; arm me with a manly courage and an unflinching resolve in the great struggle, so that I may be solidly stablished in thee and abide invincibly with thee.

Proportion thou my strength to the enterprises I must undertake for love of thee; confirm me and strengthen me in thee, and impart unto my feebler sex that manly courage which may give me the right to enter one day into the mystic chamber wherein is perfected the union of the soul with thee. Take possession of me from this hour, O Love, and keep me ever as thine own; for henceforth I will have neither soul nor will apart from thee. Amen.

AT VESPERS

At the hour of Vespers you will put on in spirit the armour of love, and go forth with unshaken courage to meet every temptation in company with Jesus who loves you; prepared to fight against the flesh, the world, and the devil, in union with him whose mercy is your abiding resource, and resolved to triumph gloriously in every conflict.

O MY sweetest Jesus, suffer not my feet to be moved, O thou who watchest over my soul, and who neither slumberest nor sleepest.

[1] Prov. xxxi. 19.

O God who art love, thou art my strong wall and my defence. Those who are amidst the trials of this world know how effectual a shelter is the peace which thou bestowest, from the glowing noontide heat, from the whirlwind and the rain. Look down upon me now, O my God: see how many my conflicts are; teach thou my hands to war and my fingers to fight.[1] Then, even though armies stand encamped against me, yet my heart shall not fear,[2] for thou art with me, within me and without, O thou my sure fortress, my strong impregnable tower.

Where is mine enemy, now that thou dost give me strength for the fight? Let him now come near against me, now whilst thou art with me to cover my head in the day of battle. Thou dost teach mine eye to detect the wiles of the devil, and thy word with its lightest breath doth overturn them. Even although mine enemy seek a thousand times to overthrow me, is not thy strong right hand ready to uphold me? Let me grasp thine hand, and cover it with my kisses; and may I ever remain beneath thy shadow undaunted and uninjured amidst the dangers of the fight.

Tread down Satan under my feet; destroy and scatter all my sins and shortcomings. Let all mine enemies fall before thy presence, even though they be a thousand at my right hand, and ten thousand on my left; let no evil come near me, O my sovereign truth and my supreme good. But thou hast also thy sharp

[1] Ps. cxliii. 1. [2] Ps. xxvi. 3.

arrows; send them forth upon me, pierce my heart with the arrow of thy love; then shall I dwell with surer trust in thee. Grant unto me that I may here fall, stricken with thine arrows, O Love divine; so shall I rest in thine arms throughout eternity. Amen.

AT COMPLINE

At the hour of Compline desire with eagerness to be inebriated with the wine of love which the Beloved poureth out for you, to close your eyes to all that is in the world, to die to yourself in the embrace of the divine Spouse, to be stripped of all that is mortal and human, and so to rest on the bosom of Jesus. Aspire to an entire detachment from yourself by the force of love to live to God alone ; prepare yourself to meet death with confidence, regarding it as the end of your long exile, and the portal of the heavenly kingdom.

O JESUS, full of love, hide me in the secret of thy face;[1] hide me from all those who lay a snare for my feet. Suffer not my soul to be put to confusion, when it shall defend itself against its enemies at thy judgment-seat, but fill it with joy and gladness by lifting upon it thy face of love.

O God who art love, thou art the consummation and crown of all good; thou lovest even to the end those whom thou hast chosen. Whosoever cometh unto thee thou wilt in no

[1] Ps. xxx. 21.

wise cast him out, but wilt keep him carefully for thyself. Deign, therefore, to claim all my whole being for thine own, and to employ it even to the end in virtue of an inalienable possession. Spare me not henceforward, but ever pierce and wound my heart, and leave no in me the faintest spark of life that is mine only. Take away my life, the life I live of myself, and keep my soul in thee.

Who will give me, O Love, to be made perfect in thee, to be set free by death from the prison of the body, and to return home from this weary exile? What bliss to see thee, O Love, and to possess thee for all eternity! At the hour of my death be thou near to comfort me; bless me then, and let thy presence be to me the fair dawn of the resplendent day I shall spend in gazing upon thee. And now, O Love, I leave my soul and my earthly life with thee; I will lay me down and take my rest in thee in peace. Amen.

Throughout this day, thus set apart for the exercise of love, use the following aspirations, in order to warm your soul in the clear shining of the true Sun, which is God himself, so that your fervour may never more grow cold, and that your love may grow from day to day.

BLESSED are the eyes which see thee, O God who art love. When shall I be admitted to that happiest place where thou, who art God and the Lamb of God, art the true and everlasting light? O Jesus, my God

and my Saviour, I know that I shall one day see thee with these eyes. Blessed are the ears which hear thee, O God who art love, thou Word of life. O when shall I hear that sweet voice which shall console me by calling me hence to thee? Drive far from me the dread of hearing the voice of the evil one;[1] but tarry not to make me hear thine own most glorious and majestic voice. Amen.

Blessed is he who breathes thy sweet odours, O God who art love. When shall the ineffable fragrance of thy Godhead be shed around me? O tarry not to open to me the fruitful pastures of eternal contemplation. Amen.

Blessed are the lips which taste how sweet thou art, O God who art love; which taste thy tenderest words, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. When shall my soul be fed with the very substance of thy Godhead, and inebriated with the abundance of thy delights? O give me here to taste how sweet thou art, my loving Master; and grant me soon to enjoy thee fully throughout eternity, thou God of my life. Amen.

O when shall I be clasped in thine everlasting embrace, thou God of my heart? When, O when shall I see thee without a veil between? O come quickly; and quickly snatch my soul from this exile, and render me for ever happy in the vision of thy face of love. Amen.

[1] Ps. cxl. 7.

At the close of this exercise of love, abandon yourself wholly into the power of God who loves you, that he may possess you as his instrument, may use you according to the good pleasure of his divine heart, and may be in you and you in him for all eternity. To these ends say :

MY love holdeth thee, O loving Jesus, nor will I let thee go. I ask not that thou bless me ere thou go; but I will hold thee ever mine, my better part, my expectation, and my hope. O Love, who art the Life, thou art also the living Word of God; kindle anew thy life within me; make amends for all the losses my love has suffered.

O God who art love, who hast created me, create me anew in thy love. O Love who hast redeemed me, redeem and give back to me all that I have lost of thy love through my negligence. O Love, who hast purchased me for thyself with thy precious Blood, sanctify me in thy truth. O God who art love, who hast adopted me as thy daughter, train and fashion me according to thine own heart. O Love, who hast chosen me for thyself, and not for another; grant me that I may wholly cleave to thee alone. O God who art love, thou hast loved me freely, gratuitously; grant that I may love thee with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength.

O Love, who art the very God Almighty; strengthen me in love. O Love, who art the sovereign wisdom; give me the spirit of wisdom to love thee withal. O Love, thou art the

spring and source of all delights; give me to taste thine ineffable sweetness. O Love, thou art dear to me above all things; give me to live for thee alone. O Love, thou art ever true; console and succour me in all my trials. O Love, thou art the chosen companion of my life; do thou work all my works in me. O Love, it is thou who gainest the victory; grant me to persevere in thee even to the end.

O Love, sweetest and most tender of loves, never hast thou failed nor forsaken me; to thee I commend my spirit. At the hour of my death draw me gently to thyself. Say unto me, "*This day* shalt thou be with me. Come forth from thine exile to enjoy that blessed *morrow* whose sun never goeth down. There shalt thou find me, even Jesus, the true *to-day* of the unfailing Light, Beginning and End of all creatures. No longer shalt thou know the changeful *morrows* of thine exile, but thou shalt have in me the everlasting, unchanging *to-day*. For ever, as I live an undying life, so shalt thou live in me—in Jesus, thy God and thy Love; in the transports and delights of a love which can never end nor change." Let all the powers of my being, all the feelings and all the energies of my soul and body, say, and say again, Amen, Amen.

SIXTH EXERCISE

PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

AFTER having kindled the flame of love in the soul entrusted to her care, St. Gertrude initiates it into the praises of the Sovereign Good. Love cannot keep silence; and so St. John tells us that in heaven the elect rest not day nor night, and that the tranquil ecstasy of their eternal love is vocal with praises uplifted to him who is the Object and the Fount of their bliss. These heavenly songs found an echo in the seraphic soul of St. Gertrude, and she has imitated them with an ardour and a transport which are scarcely of earth.

This beautiful Exercise gives the soul a foretaste of the everlasting joys. But it is not the will of the saint that the soul, still clogged and impeded by its mortal body, should await its entrance into heaven to join the song of glorified spirits. And so she suggests the substance of the songs which it may sing here below to the honour of the great God who has condescended to anticipate it with his love, and to fill it with good things.

And yet the homage of praise, elicited from the soul by the grandeur of God, suffices not to acquit its debt. It has received everything from this sovereign Lord; its being, its preservation, its vocation to heaven, its redemption, forgiveness a thousand times repeated, the abiding succours of grace, even to the latest

moment of life. In return for so many and so great benefits, it must begin in this life a thanksgiving which death cannot interrupt. It is the aim of St. Gertrude to train the soul to the discharge of this obligation, which is not less imperative than delightful; and in this Exercise she has blended the accents of the lowliest thanksgiving with those of the most lofty and jubilant praise.

SIXTH EXERCISE

Praise and Thanksgiving

Set apart a day from time to time, that you may apply yourself without impediment to singing the praises of God, and thus make amends for your past neglect in praising and blessing him for the benefits he has bestowed on you all the days of your life. This day will be one of rejoicing and of gladness, and you will keep it in anticipation of that ineffable song of praise which you will sing for ever and ever to the glory of the Lord, when your soul is satisfied in his presence and all-pervaded with his glory. Wherefore in this Exercise are some devout sighings of the soul, longing eagerly to behold the face of God.

First of all present yourself before God in the spirit of profoundest humility, and implore him to grant you to see the beauty of his countenance, saying :

I WILL take upon myself to speak to my Lord, although I am but dust and ashes. O my God, whose greatness is infinite, and who dost look down upon the things that are most lowly and of no repute, my mind and my soul have failed me while I recall thine infinite benefits. Open to me the treasure of thy compassionate heart, for there is the one object of my desires. Disclose unto me, in all its ravishing beauty, thy Face divine, that I may pour forth my soul before thee. Show me the source of that loving mercy which giveth

peace, that my heart may be glad, and my tongue be loosed to sing thy praises.

O Love, enter for me into the presence of the great God; there give utterance to the cries of my longing heart; for all my strength is gone from me by reason of my consuming thirst to behold his divine beauty. Take my soul, and bear it up with thee into the high and holy place; for my heart and my flesh faint at thought of God my Saviour. Present me to my Lord and my King; for my soul melteth[1] with love while I wait for the coming of my Spouse. O Love, make haste to satisfy my desire; for if thou tarry, I perish.

Begin the praises of the Lord :

AWAKE, O my soul, awake, and arise from the dust, and come before the Lord thy God, that thou mayest confess before him all the mercies that he hath shown unto thee. But what shall I say unto the Lord, or how shall I answer him for one of a thousand! O Love, I suffer violence; do thou answer for me, for I know not what I shall say to the God of my life. I stand speechless with admiration in presence of his glorious face. I am abashed and confounded, for the splendour of his majesty makes my heart faint, and my courage fail. O Love, do thou answer for me in Jesus my God, the true and living Word. Touch with compassion towards me that divine Heart in which thou dost so gloriously

[1] Cant. v. 6.

show forth thy power. O mighty Love, through thee I recover strength, and dare to say to the God who hath saved me: Thou, even thou, art the refuge of my soul; thou art the life of my understanding; thou the God of my heart.

O Love, attune thy melodious and excelling harp; cause me to hear the sweetest voice of Jesus my Spouse; let him, the God of my life, himself bid me begin the song of his own everlasting praise; let him charm my life and inebriate my soul with the choicest music of a song worthy of his glory. O Love, what thou doest, do quickly; for I can no longer endure the torment of the wound wherewith thou hast pierced my heart.

Encourage your soul to seek its delights in God.

LIFT up thine eyes, O my soul; behold and see the power of thy King, the grace of thy God, the love of thy Saviour, now that thou art so near to him. Take now thy rest, taste and see how fair and how comely is the Spouse thou hast chosen of a thousand. See how immense the glory is for which thou hast despised the world. See how complete the good is for which thou hast chosen to wait. See what the delights are of that country towards which thou art sighing. See how fair the splendour of that crown for which thou hast toiled. See what is the essence and what the infinite grandeur of thy God, whom

thou hast loved, whom thou hast worshipped, for whom thou hast constantly longed.

O God of my life, what praises worthy of thee can I offer thee? Truly I know not. What shall I render unto thee, O my well-beloved, for all the benefits wherewith thou hast overwhelmed me? Thou in me, and I in thee, O Jesus my one good; this is the thank-offering I set before thy glory. I have nothing else beside. My one only offering is what I am in thee, my life in thee.

For thou alone art my life, and thou the strength which upholds me. Thou art my glory, and thy mercy shines resplendent in my soul. To thee be praise and thanksgiving, world without end. O when shall it be given me to consume on thine altar all the whole inmost treasure of my soul, to enkindle my heart with the sacred flame which burns everlastingly on that altar, to immolate myself without reserve, a thank-offering unto thee!

O God, thou sacred object of my love, expand my heart in thee, enlarge my soul, and fill me with thy glory. O when shall it be said unto my soul: "Turn again into thy rest, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee"? When, O when shall I hear that blissful word: "Come, enter into the holy place of the rest of thy Spouse"? O Jesus, my sweetest peace, when shall I lay me down and take my rest in thee, whilst thou showest me all thy glory?

For thou art able to keep that which I have committed unto thee, O thou Life of my soul;

thou wilt bring it back again to him who made it. O Love, Love, when wilt thou bring my soul out of prison? When wilt thou free it from the trammels of the body? When wilt thou bring me to my Spouse, that I may be united with him in bliss unending? O Love, hasten on these divine espousals. To purchase a blessedness so vast, gladly would I die a thousand deaths; nevertheless, be that day and that hour when thou wilt, and not as I will.

Smitten with profoundest awe in presence of the glory of your God, which angels long to see, say with your whole heart the Psalm, Benedic, anima mea, Domino.

BLESS the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me bless his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul: and forget not all he hath done for thee.

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases.

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion.

Who satisfieth thy desire with good things: thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.

The Lord doeth mercies and judgment: for all that suffer wrong.

He hath made his ways known unto Moses: his will to the children of Israel.

The Lord is compassionate and merciful: long-suffering and plenteous in mercy.

He will not always be angry: nor will he threaten for ever.

He hath not dealt with us according to our sins: nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

For according to the height of heaven above the earth: he hath strengthened his mercy towards them that fear him.

As far as the east is from the west: so far hath he removed our iniquities from us.

As a father hath compassion on his children: so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him.

For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust.

Man's days are as grass: as the flower of the field so shall he flourish.

For the spirit shall pass in him, and he shall not be: and he shall know his place no more.

But the mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity: upon them that fear him.

And his justice unto children's children: to such as keep his covenant,

And are mindful of his commandments: to do them.

The Lord hath prepared his throne in heaven: and his kingdom ruleth over all.

Bless the Lord, all ye his angels: ye that are mighty in strength, and do his word, hearkening to the voice of his orders.

Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts: ye ministers of his that do his will.

Bless the Lord, all his works in every place of his dominion: bless thou the Lord, O my soul

Greet the glorious face of your Spouse in the following words :

BLESSED art thou, O Adonai, in the firmament of heaven. Blessed be thou by all the powers of my soul. Blessed by all the whole substance of my soul and of my body. Let all that is within me glorify thee. Let all my desires and yearnings combine to celebrate thy glory. For thou alone art worthy of praise and honour throughout eternity. My heart pants to quit this mortal body; my soul springeth forward to meet thee, O God, who in thy love hast created me for thyself. My soul, which thou hast redeemed, bemoans the weariness of its exile, and goeth forth towards thee, drawing with it this feeble body, even to the holy place where thou dwellest, O my King and my God.

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house. Blessed are they who exult in the vision of thy glorious face. For ever, and still for ever, are they praising thee. When shall my soul be admitted into that wonderful tabernacle[1] where with all thy glorious saints I shall eternally sing: *Holy ! holy ! holy !* in presence of thy transcending beauty ?

How glorious thou art, O my God ! How wonderful and how fair, how worthy to be praised, on the sacred throne of thy Godhead ! How beauteous is thy light to behold ! What bliss in gazing on thee, thou true Sun ! How rich and thrilling and full that song of praise

[1] Ps. xlii. 5.

which cometh up to thee from the ten thousand times ten thousand blessed spirits of heaven! I go forth from myself, I run forward to meet thee, O thou living God: and my heart and my soul already leap for joy. O my God and my supreme delight, how dazzling is thy glory on the sapphire throne of thy boundless empire, around which angels and saints hymn thy grandeur!

And now my soul languisheth and fainteth by reason of the weariness of this life. Though I am but the refuse of thy creation, my one longing desire is to die to be with thee, to offer thee the homage of my song of gladness in unison with that happy company who sing thy praises eternally in the heavens. There, on the altar of thy divine heart, will I burn the incense that thou lovest, the incense of my heart's love and praise, which I shall gladly offer thee in return for all the favours with which thou, my Father and my Master, hast consoled me in all my tribulation and anguish here below.

Break forth in praise and thanksgiving.

LET all thy wonderful works, and all the gifts of thy bounty unto me, bless thee, glorify thee, and praise thee for me, O God of my life. Let thy great and manifold mercies, and all thine infinite benefits to my soul, bless thee, O God of my heart. Let my inmost soul, my whole being and life, bless thee; for thou art the God of my salvation and my refuge.

Sing with joy unto the Lord before the throne of God and of the Lamb, remembering all his benefits.

LET all the longing desires of my heart praise and bless thee, O my loving God, and all the gratitude I render thee for the graces thou hast bestowed upon me. Let the sighings and groanings of my soul in this weary exile praise thee, and all the patience wherewith I wait for the one great gift, which is none other than thyself. Be thou praised, O my God, in the hope and trust I have that thou wilt one day raise me up from the dust, and unite me for ever to thyself.

All praise and thanksgiving be unto thee, O my beloved Redeemer, for the seal of faith which thou hast impressed on my soul, whereby I know that in my flesh I shall one day see thee. All praise to thee, O my God, and my soul's eternal home, from the yearning aspiration of my heart towards thee, from the thirst which consumes me till I come unto thee. Let the divine love which has prevented and anticipated my heart, and bound me to thee to love thee with an unchanging love, itself praise thee for me: for thou, O my God, beloved object of my heart, thou art God alone, and blessed for evermore.

Lay your soul prostrate in adoration before the face of the Lord your God, and implore Jesus to deign to supply whatever is lacking in your worship.

O JESUS, full of love, when wilt thou give me to come into thy home to offer thee my sacrifice of praise, and to lay at thy feet

the vows my lips have spoken in the tribulation of my exile? When shall I stand before thy throne to gaze upon the fair beauty of thy countenance, whose divine splendour satisfieth the longing desires of all saints, and calls forth their sweetest and loudest songs of praise?

Hear thou my cry, O thou best-beloved of my heart. Let thine ear be attentive to the voice of my prayer, and answer me; for thee alone doth my sighing heart and my longing soul desire. If mine eyes run down with tears, it is that they have been so long and so wistfully lifted up unto thee. Thou art my God and my delight, my love and my hope from my youth; none will I have, none desire, none hope for, but only thee alone.

Thou art seated at the right hand of God the Father in my very human nature, O thou my well-beloved, and there thou puttest forth all the might of thy love. There my name is graven upon the palms of thy hands, on thy feet, and on thy sweetest heart, that so thou mayest never forget my soul, which thou hast redeemed at so great a cost. O my God and my mercy, for all the good thou hast showed unto me, for all that thou showest me now, or wilt show unto me hereafter for ever, do thou render unto thyself infinite and eternal thanksgivings, according to thine infinite power, and as thou knowest that it beseemeth thy great and glorious majesty.

Deign to perform this duty for me, O my most beloved Jesus, in all the extent of thy righteous claims, O my Master, who art so

great and so wonderful. Do thou praise thyself in thee, in me, and for me, with all the might of thy Godhead and with all the loving affections of thy manhood, on behalf of all thy whole universe of creatures, until thou shalt bring me, who am but a mere atom in thy creation, through thyself the Way, unto thyself the Truth, in thyself the Life, into which thou wilt plunge me and hide me, in that blissful abode where I shall enjoy the vision of thy beauteous face for evermore.

Overwhelmed with wonder and joy at the thought of the glory which surrounds the divine Majesty, offer to the God whom you love the heavenly Psalm, Exaltabo te, Deus meus Rex.

I WILL extol thee, O God my King: and I will bless thy name for ever, yea, for ever and ever.

Every day will I bless thee: and I will praise thy name for ever, yea, for ever and ever.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: and of his greatness there is no end.

Generation and generation shall praise thy works: and they shall declare thy power.

They shall speak of the magnificence of the glory of thy holiness: and shall tell thy wondrous works.

And they shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and shall declare thy greatness.

They shall publish the memory of the abundance of thy sweetness: and shall rejoice in thy justice.

The Lord is gracious and merciful: patient and plenteous in mercy.

The Lord is sweet to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

Let all thy works praise thee, O Lord: and let thy saints bless thee.

They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom: and shall tell of thy power.

To make thy might known to the sons of men: and the glory of the magnificence of thy kingdom.

Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages: and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

The Lord is faithful in all his words: and holy in all his works.

The Lord lifteth up all that fall: and setteth up all that are cast down.

The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord: and thou givest them meat in due season.

Thou openest thy hand: and fillest every living creature with blessing.

The Lord is just in all his ways: and holy in all his works.

The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him: to all that call upon him in truth.

He will do the will of them that fear him: and he will hear their prayer and save them.

The Lord keepeth all them that love him: but all the wicked he will destroy.

My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever, yea, for ever and ever.

O MY King and my God, my love and my blessedness, my soul and my heart exult and sing for joy to thee, O my God, life of my soul, living and true God, thou source of everlasting light, whereof one ray hath fallen from thy countenance on me unworthy, to stamp thy likeness on me; to thee my heart longeth to offer its homage of praise and blessing. Wherefore I offer unto thee now all my powers of soul and body as a sacrifice and burnt-offering before thee.

But what shall I render unto thee, O my Master, for all the benefits which thou hast bestowed on me? For thou hast loved me more than thine own glory. For my sake thou hast not even spared thyself; and when thou hadst created me, redeemed and elected me, thou didst make me that thou mightest draw me to thyself and give me life in thee, and thou hast predestinated me to enjoy thee throughout eternity. And is it not meet and right that, above all in heaven or earth, above all that is not thee, I should desire thee alone, and crave thee as my last end?

O Lord, thou art my hope and my glory, my joy and my blessedness. My soul is athirst for thee. In thee my soul findeth its life, and in thee my heart leapeth for joy. Whither should my adoring love draw me, but to thy bosom, O my God? Thou art the beginning of all good, and thou its blissful consummation; thine elect are filled with bliss in thee. My heart and my mouth can sing thy praise alone. The glory which streams from thee issues from

thy love, which is the glad springtime of all that live. Let thine own sovereign Godhead bless and glorify thee that thou art the fount of life and the well-spring of life everlasting; for no creature can attain unto a thanksgiving and praise worthy of thee. Thou alone sufficest unto thyself, and thou faintest not, neither art thou ever weary. Thy countenance, sweeter than milk and honey, is the food of thine elect, who behold it evermore.

Bless the Lord God, your great King, for all his mercies towards you, saying :

LET thy glorious and wonderful light bless thee for me, O my God. Let thy sovereign majesty celebrate thy praise. Let thine ineffable glory, and thine infinite power, bless thee and praise thee for me. Let the splendour of thine eternal brightness, and the spell of thy dazzling beauty, praise thee and bless thee for me.

Let the great deep of thy most righteous judgment, and the unfathomable abyss of thine eternal wisdom, praise thee and bless thee for me. Let thy mercies without number, and the boundless munificence of thy benefits to all thy creatures, bless thee and praise thee for me.

Offer to the Lord a sacrifice of gladness, and say devoutly:

LET thy bowels of compassion towards us, and the overflowing abundance of thy great goodness, sing thy praises, O my God,

with transports of joy. Let thy love, which breaketh forth upon man like a torrent, and the irrepressible liberality of thy love, extol thee with gladness. Let the triumphant strength of thine infinite sweetness, and the fulness of bliss for evermore, which thou hast laid up for them that love thee, be thine ineffable praise.

And now adore the Lord your God, and beseech him to bring you into his holy tabernacle, and to praise himself for you.

O MY God, thou Life supremely blessed, towards whom alone my soul doth look, when shall the hour come when I, a faint and feeble spark, shall be drawn into thy keen and flashing flame, in the splendours of thy saints? There, before thy resplendent throne, shall my feeble tongue resound thy praises; there shall all creation raise to thee one grand concordant song of praise and thanksgiving, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. When shall I be set as a sweet-sounding string in the harp of seraphim? that harp which giveth forth evermore the ineffable: Holy! holy! holy! When, O when shall my heart blend its ecstasy with theirs?

When shall my feet be plucked out of the snare of the hunters, arrayed in the white fleece of thy spotless purity, and admitted to gaze on thee, thou fairer than the choirs of angels, who leadest the exulting songs of virgins and of saints? When shall it be given me to hear the new song of the heavenly espousals,

which thou their King and their Spouse singest unto them with melody so ravishing; that song which soars above the mighty acclaim of all creation, and with its excelling sweetness hushes every voice and every tongue of thine elect!

O how blessed is that abode where sovereign praise and thanksgiving are rendered everlastingly to God, One in Substance, Three in Persons, by the divine Unity and the divine Trinity itself; where the heavenly harpers hush their thrilling harmony and listen silently; where burning seraphim droop their wings in ravishment ineffable! O God of my heart, dearest object of my desires, by thy power and thy great goodness deign to grant that the feeble note which sings my worthless praise and thanksgiving may mingle with the melody ever flowing from thy sacred Heart. Let this my homage of gratitude for all thou hast done for me, for my creation and my redemption, for my vocation and withdrawal from the world, blend with thine own harmonious hymn.

Express in this transcendent melody my love for thee. Draw its ties so closely that my soul may be ceaselessly rapt and ravished at thought of thee amidst the trials and sorrows of this land of exile. May I ever thirst after thy praise; may my desire to return to thee who madest me be daily more glowing and eager, until I lay down the weight of this oppressive body, and stand before thee in thine inmost secret place. Then, when I gaze on thy Godhead, shall my heart overflow with

gladness, and my tongue break forth in song; then shall thy goodness be to me the fount of a joy ever new and never-ending, and the vision of thy face divine a bliss unbroken and without alloy.

Here your soul, transported with the vision of the riches and delights of the glory of its God, lost in wonder at the everlasting song which celebrates his divine beauty, ravished with the splendour of the heavenly court, inebriated with the resplendent charms of its divine Spouse, will invite all creatures to sing his praise, saying the hymn, Benedicite.

O ALL ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye angels of the Lord, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever

O ye heavens, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O all ye waters that are above the heavens, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O all ye powers of the Lord, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye sun and moon, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye stars of heaven, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye showers and dews, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye mighty winds, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye fire and heat, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye cold and frost, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye dews and hoar-frost, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye ice and snow, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye nights and days, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye light and darkness, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye lightnings and clouds, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O let the earth bless the Lord: yea, let it praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye mountains and hills, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye herbs and plants that spring up from the earth, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye fountains, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye seas and rivers, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye whales and all that move in the waters, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O all ye fowls of the air, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O all ye beasts and cattle, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye sons of men, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O let Israel bless the Lord: yea, let them praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye priests of the Lord, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye servants of the Lord, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye spirits and souls of the just, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye holy and humble of heart, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

Let us bless the Father and the Son, with the Holy Ghost: yea, let us praise and exalt him above all for ever.

Blessed be thou, O Lord, in the firmament of heaven: and worthy to be praised and exalted over all for ever.

And then continue, as follows :

MY heart and my flesh have rejoiced in thee, O living God. My soul is transported with gladness in thee, O my true and only Saviour. O how lovely is thy temple, O Lord God of hosts! How glorious is thy dwelling-place, where thou reignest in thy majesty, most high over all beings! My soul falls back baffled and wearied at the threshold of this glorious abode. O God, O my God, O thou love and joy of my heart, my refuge and my strength, my honour and my glory; when shall the hour come when I shall be admitted to praise thee in the great assembly of thy saints?

When shall I see thee with mine eyes, O my God, O thou God of gods? When wilt thou fill me with gladness by disclosing to me thy lovely face, O thou God of my heart? When wilt thou fulfil my soul's desire by showing me thy glory? O my God, my chosen inheritance, my strength and my glory, when shall I mingle among the mighty spirits who gaze on thy strength and thy glory? When wilt thou clothe me with the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that I may be gathered up amongst thy holy angels, and all the members of my body, and all the powers of my soul, unite to sing sweet praises unto thee?

O God of my life, when shall I come into the tabernacle of thy glory to sing sweet Alleluias in thine honour, while my heart and my soul show forth before all thy saints the mercies thou hast bestowed upon me? O my God, my kingly inheritance, when shall the snare be broken which holds me fast in death, and when will the wall of separation fall which keeps my soul from thee? When shall I dwell in thine house for ever, and show forth thy praise without distraction, and sing the ever-new song of thy wondrous mercies?

Who among the gods is like unto thee, O my sovereign Master, and what can compare with the magnificence of thy glory? Who can sound the depths of thy wisdom, or number the treasures of thine unwearied mercy? None is like unto thee, O my God, O eternal King. Who can presume to speak of thy glory and thy majesty? Who throughout eternity can

exhaust the blessedness with which the vision of thy splendour fills the soul? How can mortal eye be keen to see, or mortal ear be strong to hear, the marvels of that beatific vision?

O God, O my God, thou alone art wonderful and glorious; thou alone art great and worthy to be praised; thou alone art gentle and loving; thou alone all fair and full of charms; thou alone so perfect that all the glories of earth and heaven are pale to thee. Thy light ravishes my heart; it is the one exclusive object of my love; its faintest, most distant ray rejoices my heart, and changes the weariness of life into bliss and gladness.

O light divine, when wilt thou come and kindle the torch of my soul, that it may burn and shine in thee, and be no more extinguished for ever, so that in thee I may know even as I am known? O blessed is the soul which thy glorious essence keepeth thus hidden in itself. When shall I be sweetly absorbed in thee, thou divine centre, towards which all things living tend; and thus become, all unworthy as I am, one only love, one spirit with thee? Mine inmost soul crieth out: Lord, who is like unto thee? No, thou hast not, nor canst have, any equal in thy glory; for thou art the one only God, triumphant and renowned amongst the generations that are past. When wilt thou raise me up from the dust, and bring me, poor and miserable as I am, before thy kingly face, and take from my head the ashes of humiliation, and crown me with unfading joy? Then shall

my soul, in its glowing, eternal enthusiasm, break forth into singing, and show forth for evermore its gratitude for all thy great and undeserved mercies.

Meanwhile, O thou God of my heart, my whole heart and soul aspire towards thee with all their living energy, O thou my God, mine everlasting inheritance. My spirit doth rejoice in thee, O God my Saviour. Were all creatures, all the fair works of thy fingers, mine, I would form and blend them into a concert of praise unto thy glory. The thought alone of thy praise melteth my spirit and my soul within me. Why have I not the collected strength of angels and of men? With what gladness would I employ it all for thy glory, so that I might one day hear the sweet and solemn harmonies which echo round thy sacred throne in that abode where thou keepest thine eternal sabbath in rest ecstatic, thou and the virgin Ark in which thy holiness deigned to dwell enshrined; in that abode where unnumbered millions of thine elect gird thee round, and unceasing sing: HOLY! HOLY! HOLY!

Nay, even now I cast my heart as a grain of incense into the golden censer of thy divine heart, wherein burns to thy glory the sweet perfume of everlasting love; desiring, with all the energy of my whole soul, that, all vile and unworthy as it is, it may be kindled by the breath of thy spirit, and consume away to thy glory alone; and that the deep sighs I breathe forth now towards thee from the depths of the abyss of earth, during this my long and

weary expectation, may be one day changed into glad and everlasting songs of praise to thy glory. Amen.

And now, glowing with desire to show forth the praise of God, and finding no words equal to his grandeur, beseech the Lord Jesus, who loves you, himself to glorify himself for you, as he wills and how he wills.

BLESSED be thou, O my God and my sweetness, in the sacred glory of thy Godhead, which did not abhor for nine months to inhabit and to fill the most chaste womb of the Virgin Mary.

Blessed be thou in the most high and holy majesty of thy Godhead, which deigned to come down even into the lowest depths of this valley of our humiliation.

Blessed be thou, O God most high, in the loving ingenuity of thine almightiness, whereby thou didst shed upon the Virgin Rose so great virtue and grace and manifold charms, that thy love did not disdain to desire her beauty.

Blessed be thou in thy wondrous wisdom, whereby thou didst pour upon Mary all the treasures of thy grace, and fit her, both in body and soul, to fulfil all the decrees of thine infinite greatness.

Blessed be thou in thy love, so mighty, wise and tender, whereby thou didst condescend to become the Son of the Virgin.

Blessed be thou in that wondrous abasement of thy glorious majesty, which hath prepared

for me the treasures of the everlasting inheritance.

Blessed be thou in the union which thou hast contracted with my human nature, whereby thou dost call me to be partaker of thy divine nature.

Blessed be thou in that long exile of three and thirty years which thou didst endure for me, that thou mightest bring back to the source of life eternal my soul, which was lost.

Blessed be thou in thy toil, thy sufferings, and thy sweat of blood, whereby thou hast sanctified my pain, my anguish, and my sickness.

Blessed be thou in thy deep experience of my misery, whereby we know thee to be the Father of infinite mercy and the God of boundless consolation.

Blessed be thou in thy superabounding love, whereby thou hast redeemed my soul.

Blessed be thou in all and each of the drops of thy most precious blood, wherewith thou hast quickened my soul, which thou hast redeemed.

Blessed be thou in the bitterness of thy precious death, which in thine infinite love thou hast borne for me; in that death, in virtue of which I take thy merit to atone for my lack of all merit, and trust without presumption that thou dost really care for me; for thou art mine and I am thine through that eternal redemption.

Blessed be thou in thy triumphant glory, for it is in the truth of my flesh that thou

sittest at the right hand of the Father, O my God, blessed for evermore.

Blessed be thou in thy divine light and splendour and power, the wondering contemplation of which is the food and the full contentment of all the inhabitants of the heavenly court.

And now rise higher still, and implore the sovereign Lord, who loves you, to join his blessed Mother and all the host of heaven, and to sing to his own glory a song of jubilant gladness, in all the transports of that love which is his own felicity, employing both his Godhead and his Manhood as instruments in that sublimest harmony. Say then, with all your heart:

JOY and gladness be to thee in my name, O God of my life, for the sovereignty of thy divine Trinity, for the essential unity of thy substance, for the distinct properties of thy Persons, for their union and intercommunion, source of thine own ineffable blessedness.

Joy and gladness be unto thee for thine incomprehensible grandeur, for thine unchangeable eternity, for thy supreme and most spotless holiness, source and cause of all holiness, and for thy most glorious and consummate beatitude.

Joy and gladness be unto thee for the most pure flesh of thy human nature, wherewith thou hast purified me, making thyself bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.

Joy and gladness be to thee for thy grand

majestic soul, that one precious offering which hath redeemed my soul.

Joy and gladness be to thee for thy divine heart, pierced by love for me, even unto death.

Joy and gladness be to thee for that most loving and faithful heart, which was opened for me by the lance, that I might enter therein, and therein make my rest.

Joy and gladness be to thee from that sweetest heart, my one refuge and shelter in my exile, from that heart so full of tender care for me, whose love is so set on me that it cannot rest till it hath received me into itself for evermore.

Joy and gladness be to thee for the most worthy heart and soul of the glorious Virgin Mary thy Mother, whom thou hast given me as my mother in all that touches my salvation, thus opening to me for ever the treasures of her maternal love.

Joy and gladness be to thee for the loving care thou hast shown me, in that thou hast given me an advocate so prevailing, at whose intercession I may obtain thy grace so readily and so surely, and in presence of whom I cannot doubt that thou keepest for me thine everlasting mercy.

Joy and gladness be to thee in that wondrous tabernacle of thy glory, wherein alone thou hast been worthily worshipped and served, and in which thou findest the praise and the glory which are due to thee from me.

Joy and gladness be to thee on my behalf, from the seven glorious spirits who stand before thy throne.

Joy and gladness be to thee from the innumerable hosts of angels, whom thou dost employ to guide and to train thine elect family which thou hast redeemed.

Joy and gladness be to thee from the four and twenty ancients, from the patriarchs and prophets, who fall down before thee, and cast their crowns before thy throne, and attune their golden harps to thine eternal praise.[1]

Joy and gladness be to thee from the four living creatures having wings, which rest not day nor night, singing thy praises with transport ineffable.

Joy and gladness be to thee from the glorious company of the Apostles, whom thou didst make thy brethren and thy friends, and on whose intercession thou dost wondrously sustain thy holy Church.

Joy and gladness be to thee from the triumphant army of martyrs, who bear the banner and the colours of thy precious blood.

Joy and gladness be to thee from the countless multitude of confessors, all arrayed in perfection, and whose souls thou dost ravish with gladness in thy marvellous light.

Joy and gladness be to thee from the spotless company of virgins, who shine forth in thee with a purity more dazzling than snow.

Joy and gladness be to thee from that new song which they sing everlastingly, as they follow thee whithersoever thou goest, O Jesus, full of goodness, king and spouse of virgins.

Joy and gladness be to thee for the sweet

[1] Apoc. iv. 13.

food of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is none other than the beholding thy face divine.

Joy and gladness be to thee from all the whole host of thine elect, who are thine inheritance and the people of thy possession; for they are with thee, O my God, and thou with them, for all eternity.

Joy and gladness be to thee from all the stars of heaven, which hearken unto thy commandment and do thy will unfailingly.

Joy and gladness be to thee from all thy creatures, who fill heaven and earth and the great deep. May they give thee back that eternal praise which floweth forth from thee, and to thee as its source returns.

Joy and gladness be to thee from my heart and my soul, from my spirit and my flesh, and from all the creatures of thine hand. To thee from whom are all things, by whom are all things, in whom all things, to thee alone be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Having thus revived your soul and enlarged your heart by praising God in his holy place, seek your delight in him who loveth you, casting into him all the love of your heart, that he may sustain you here below with the benedictions of his sweetness,[1] *and hereafter admit you to enjoy it fully in heaven.*

O GOD, O my God, since thou art mine, I shall lack nothing; and since I am thine, I will evermore glory in thee, my God and my

[1] Ps. xx. 4.

Saviour. For thou dost prepare a table of gladness before me, amidst all my tribulations and my sadness. Where is my soul's bliss if it be not in thee, O God of my life? If the mere thought of thy praise be so sweet amidst the miseries of this life, what will it be, O my God, when the splendour of thy Godhead shall shine forth in all its glory? If the few and scanty drops which reach me now have such virtue to nourish and sustain, what will it be, O thou infinite sweetness, when thou shalt be given to me in thy boundless immensity? If now thy consolations satisfy the longing which draws me towards the sovereign good, what will it be, O God of my salvation, when thou shalt absorb and hide my soul in thee?

What must the pastures of that happy land be where thou showest thy face, if already, here below, one passing glimpse of thee doth melt my soul, and blend it inseparably with thine? How will the unclouded view of thy divine countenance feed and sustain it, if even now its hunger be fully satisfied with the crumbs thou lettest fall from time to time from thy divine table? O God, O my God, when thou drawest my soul after thee, thou leavest me no liberty to feel or think of aught but thee, thou ravishest me from myself. In these blessed moments I have no thought nor care for myself; for thou drawest me with sweetest force into thee, so that I am hidden from myself.

What will be my joy, my bliss, my ecstasy, when thou shalt disclose to me the charms of thy Godhead, and my soul shall see thee face

to face? when I shall have no other occupation than to rest on evermore in the contemplation of thy glory, O my God; no other love than to stand beside the heavenly altar whereon my redemption was effected; than to offer thee, on that altar and to thy glory, the inmost feelings of my soul in a transport of gladness, and with songs of everlasting praise.

Then, O my soul, shalt thou see and abound; and thou, my wondering heart, shalt be enlarged,[1] when this torrent of riches and of delight shall break forth on thee; when the glory of the august Trinity, like a mighty sea, shall swallow thee up; when thou shalt be surrounded by that great multitude whom the King of kings and Lord of lords hath redeemed from the power of the enemy, having made bare his almighty arm; when thou shalt be sunk and lost and borne away beneath the rushing flood of the mercy, the love, the almightiness, the wisdom, the goodness of thy God; when thou shalt know and feel thyself adopted finally and for evermore. Then shall be given unto thee the cup of the vision of God; that grand inebriating cup whereof drinks for ever the soul which beholds the glory of the face of God.

Then shalt thou quench thy thirst at the torrent of eternal delights; and he who is the source of all delight shall fill thee with the fulness of a boundless joy. Then shalt thou see the heavens all filled with the glory of God who dwelleth in them, and thine eyes shall see

[1] Isa. lx. 5.

that virgin star which, brightest next to God, filleth heaven with the splendour of its purest lustre; then shalt thou see all the wondrous works of the hand of thy God, and the morning stars praising him together, and all the sons of God making joyful melody.[1]

Alas, alas, O God of my heart and my portion for ever, how long shall my soul languish still and pine for the bliss of seeing thee? Thou alone knowest how sad and wretched this my exile is, and to what perils my frailty is exposed. O beloved object of my heart's desire, my soul is athirst after thee; draw me soon to thyself, O God, thou source of my life, that I may drink eternal life from thee. Let the rays of thy countenance fall full upon me, and let me see thee face to face. O show thyself unto me, and give me bliss in thee for evermore.

O thou life of my soul, change these plaintive cries which my soul utters, in the anguish of its baffled yearnings, into a song of joy and gladness. Fashion my whole life to thy love, that all my actions may be hymns of praise to thee, that all my intentions may be united to thine adorable good pleasure, and may all tend towards thee and meet in thee, who art the true life of my soul.

O my heart's true Love, render now to thyself thanksgiving for me, and let all the ravished court of heaven unite with thee to thank thee, that thou, O my God, dost condescend to be my sovereign and most exquisite good; that thou hast vouchsafed to make thyself

[1] Job xxxviii. 7.

known to one who is the very refuse of thy creatures, and to be loved and praised by her; for thou art God my Saviour, the author of my salvation, and the life of my soul.

And in this lofty hymn of praise my soul, melted with its glowing love, shall blend its feeble voice until my spirit return to thee, to taste true bliss in thee, my God. Give me to seek and to find my happiness here below in the thought of thine everlasting praise, that at the hour of my departure my thirst to behold thee, to praise thee, to be with thee, and the energy of my love of thee, may surmount the pangs of death. In that last agony be thou my door and my eternal home; and do thou bring me up to the height of that heavenly, blissful life, where my heart and my soul shall for ever exult with joy in thee. Amen.

And now that you are become as the bereaved and lonely turtle-dove, moaning by reason of the weariness of this life and of your longing to see the face of your Beloved, fold the wings of your restless desires, even as the winged living creatures before the throne of God. Protest before God that your heart is wholly there where your treasure is, and implore of him a happy death.

MY heart is fixed there where Jesus hath wished it to be fixed. Yes, O my Jesus, beloved supremely above all, thou art the abiding life of my soul. For thee my heart languisheth; it thirsteth after thee. A wound of rapture hath torn and pierced it; the light

of this world is torment and anguish, because I know thy beauty and thy greatness, thy love, and the blessedness that is in thee.

My heart is dreary with delay. How long, O my well-beloved, how long shall I look for the moment when I shall enjoy thee, and shall gaze upon thy beauteous face? To my thirsting soul heaven and earth, and all that is therein, apart from thee, are chill and dreary as a winter's day. My glad spring-time, my one only consolation, will be at length to see thy face.

O love, when wilt thou bid my body return to the dust, that my liberated soul may soar on high to thee, its God and living source? The divine rays which stream from thy throne, and come even unto me, ravish my whole being with pure and genial light. Why dost thou so long leave upon the tree this poor and helpless leaf, to be shaken and buffeted by the fierceness of the storms of this world?

O love, uphold me with thy strong right hand, that my soul be not swept away. O stream of living waters, thy sweet murmur hath soothed my heart; for earth hath no music so exquisitely soft. This life has grown unto me as a vain and empty dream. How long shall I be constrained to endure its hollow illusion? Yet, O love, break not the tie whereby thou holdest me, unless it be to bring me to the one beloved of my heart, and to lay me on his loving bosom. O thou divine fruit of life, O thou whom my soul loveth more than all, thy sweet fragrance hath ravished my heart;

to me this body is but vile corruption, and my sighs go up ceaselessly towards thee.

O love, love, when wilt thou set me free from this vile body, that so I may enjoy without obstruction him who is the well-beloved of my heart, and dwell with him for ever? One single ray of thy Godhead, streaming upon me through the veil of thy manhood hath so transported my soul, that had I a thousand bodies, I should loathe them all; what, then, must be the delights of the full unclouded splendour of thine unveiled beauty? Gladly would I die a thousand deaths, if so it were given me to behold thy truth arrayed in all its charms.

O love, love, have pity on me; take me quickly home to that banquet of delights where I shall see the glory of the Saviour, my true and faithful Spouse. The fulness of thy Godhead alone, O my Jesus, can satisfy the soul which thou hast deigned to make for thyself. One smallest drop of thy sweetness so ravishes my soul, that death would be delightful to me above a thousand lives, if so it were given me to see thee for evermore.

O love, love, when wilt thou come, and so entirely separate my soul from my body, that it may have no other dwelling-place than thee? Thy loving embrace, O my Jesus—alas, how rare and brief!—is so surpassingly sweet, that had I a thousand hearts, they would all melt within me at thy touch. The kiss of thy divine mouth absorbs my life in thine, and my soul dares to impress on thee its

answering kiss of love. O bliss transcending thought. O that then I could sink in death, and lose myself beneath the gleaming billows of thy Godhead!

O love, love, delay not to celebrate my high, eternal espousals. Take my soul up out of this valley of misery; let it lose itself as a feeble drop in the shoreless ocean whence it came at the bidding of my God. O sweet Jesus. beloved above all and with all my heart's strength, mine elect, my only one, be thou my guide throughout this time of trial; grant that I may end my days in thy praise, in thy grace, and in thy favour.

O Jesus, my sweet love, be thou the sure refuge of thy poor and lowly spouse, who has neither hope nor inheritance but in thee. Guide her over the swelling waves of the pathless sea of this life; be her consolation when the storm of death shall lower. Stretch forth then the hand of thy compassion; be thou then my sure stay, on whom I may rest the weight of my being. O then, my most loving Redeemer, do thou with one majestic look scatter and defeat all the enemies of my soul.

O Jesus, my true and faithful friend, let the great deep of thy tender mercy be then my shelter from my appalling foe. Be thou the sure hiding-place whither I may flee with joyful trust, to escape the captivity of my sins. O Jesus, my beloved hope, let thy divine heart, which was pierced for love of me, and is ever open to all sinners, be the first refuge of my soul when it quits this body. There, in that

abyss of love, shall all my sins be blotted out in a moment; and with thee, O thou well-beloved of my heart, I shall go up my unobstructed, unimpeded way, to the source of heavenly joys.

O Jesus, my only hope, my Saviour and my God, send to me at my last hour thy tender Mother Mary, that soft-shining star of the sea, that she may stand by me as my sure defence. Her face, fair as the bright dawn of morning, will make me feel and know that thou too, O divine Sun of justice, art drawing near to my soul in all thy splendour. O my beloved above all, thou knowest the desire of my heart; thou knowest that my soul sigheth after thee alone. O come, then, come quickly; at sight of thy beauteous face my soul will remember its sufferings and sorrows no more.

O love, love, watch over the hour of my death; seal it with thy seal, that I may know thou wilt be with me then, and that thy goodness, my sole stay in that dread hour, will remove far from me whatever might hurt my soul. Show forth thy most loving wisdom in that critical hour, O thou great King! Strengthen my weak soul, that it may bear for ever the impress of the unutterable mercy wherewith thou hast dealt with me in life and in death. Draw up all my powers into thee, and plunge me into the mighty deep of thy Godhead, where the sight of Jesus, the beloved of my heart, will restore my wasted strength, and satisfy my longing desire, and fill my soul to overflowing for evermore.

Persevere with holy importunity in commending the end of your life to God, imploring him to aid you then, and to order all its circumstances in his great mercy.

O MY God and my Lord, my most loving Creator and Redeemer, thou one hope of my heart, in whom I have believed, whose faith I have ever professed, thou crimson-glowing flower of the Godhead, pour forth upon me as the dew the favours of thy most sacred manhood. Gladden my soul by shedding upon it the sweet influences of thy tender charity, that it may no more remember the anguish of its exile, and may put forth in thee the fragrant flower of all the virtues whereof thou hast sown in it the precious seed, O thou who art the brightest gem and the incomparable flower of all virtues. With thee may it endure the miseries of this pilgrimage in a strange land, and abide in patience amidst all its tribulations and anguish.

O my God and my King, who dwellest in the holy place of the heaven of heavens, thou in whom my life is hid with Jesus, thy chaste delights have steeped my soul in bliss. Already is my life quenched in thee; whither, then, can I go out of thee? I know but thee alone in heaven or in earth. O my God, thou glory of Israel, who dwellest on high in the heavens, thou in whom I live and move and have my being, my trust is stayed on thee alone. In thee alone my heart opens and dilates, for thou art my one joy and all my desire. The rays

of thy glorious light have fallen on mine eyes, and awakened my soul from its slumber.

When shall my soul be lost in the still waters of the river of life? When shall thy love take me hence, and give me back myself, in that abode where I shall see thee, O God of my life, thou author of my salvation, and only refuge of my soul? Without thee I am nothing, I know nothing, I can do nothing; in thee alone I hope, to thee alone I long to come, to remain inseparably and for ever united to thee with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength.

Hallow my whole being and my life for thy praise and thy greater glory. Enable my soul to glorify thee constantly and perfectly in all its thoughts and words and works, yea, in its every movement; and let my body be consecrated to thy love with all its powers in all their energy. Now it is but the dreary prison-house whence my soul sigheth after thee, O God, thou source of my life. In this exile it knoweth not when the soul enters into it, nor when it shall leave it. But, O Father of mercies, thou wilt not despise nor forsake the work of thine own hands. O let thine infinite compassion regard my mournful exile; that exile which thou thyself didst for three-and-thirty years deign to share. Give me now and all along ever to feel the effects of that goodness, of which thou didst display the unfathomable tenderness when, for my redemption, thy sweetest heart was broken for love upon the cross.

O thou, the life and the bliss of my soul,

be my victory and my triumph in all temptations, my patience in all infirmities, my consolation in all trials; be thou my end and aim, my beginning and my end, in all I think or speak or do; my sanctification all my life long; my perseverance in this protracted expectation, even to the glad issue of my warfare.

O my peerless inheritance, thou treasure of my soul, thou only end of my expectation and my hope, when the moment shall come that I must leave this world, order all things for me in thy wondrous goodness. Place in my hand the banner of thy holy cross, to defend me from all the wiles of Satan. May the hallowed weapons of thy triumphant Passion, the nails and the spear, be unerring shafts which shall pierce and scatter my enemies. May thy death be unto me a sure rampart and defence—that death which was thy most glorious triumph and the measure and proof of thy love for me. Sprinkle me over with thy blood, the price of my redemption; and be thou my viaticum and my guide when I pass through the strait gate of death.

Leave me not in that dread hour nor forsake me, O thou who hast loved me, who hast made me for thyself; but bring me to that blessed abode where I shall see thee face to face. There, O Jesus, dear deliverer of my soul, wilt thou show me the splendour of thy Godhead; there wilt thou fill my mind and my soul with the ravishing gladness of thy praise; there my heart shall sing and leap for joy in thee, O my sweet salvation, for ever and for ever.

Then my soul, which thou hast redeemed, shall enjoy the good things of thy house. Then shall it feed on the ecstatic vision of thee, and exult as it calls to mind the countless snares and wiles of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the sore anguish of death, from which it has for ever escaped. Then shall it taste the sweetness of the inheritance it possesses in thee who art its life, in that abode where thou wilt be in me and I in thee, eternally one with thee in an indissoluble bond of love. Then shall it glorify thee, O God of my life, my Redeemer, my soul's beloved, for all the graces and blessings which thou hast showered upon it.

Implore our Lord to give you his blessing, and to confirm his love in you, until you come to the beatific vision.

O THOU love which unitest and makest one, thou God of my heart and joy of my mind, my King and my God, my beloved, chosen among ten thousand; thou Spouse of my soul, thou Lord of Hosts, whom alone my soul loveth and desireth. Be thou in this world my blessed and sufficing portion. Let my soul be one spirit with thee, until it be eternally united to thee; let it obey no other impulse, have no other will, know no other affection, than thine alone. Thou art the glowing fire of love; grant me here, in this my pilgrimage, thy living and effectual blessing, gentle and enkindling, that all my whole being may be

set on fire and consume away in the glow of thy love.

O living love, be thou unto me that blessing which consummates and renders perfect. Grant that my soul may walk before thee as beseems thy chosen spouse. Rule and guide my whole life in thy love. Order my death in full vigour of faith and hope and charity; fit me for it by a worthy reception of the sacraments of holy Church. Use up and exhaust all my powers in thy service; consume in the flame of thy love, even to the last vestige of my body; then shall my soul, freed from its heavy burden, follow thee, who dost deign to love me so tenderly, into the luminous heights of the most holy Trinity. There shall all my sins be forgiven me by thy goodness; there thine incomprehensible charity will cover all the multitude of my offences; there my being shall rise again from its ruins in virtue of its union with thee, my Jesus, thou priceless treasure of love. There my soul, which now pineth away by reason of the weariness of life, shall renew its youth in thee, O ever-living love. There shall it soar on eagle wings, and grasp its ineffable bliss in the vision of thy beloved face; for there it will have laid hold on eternal life, in that it holds thee as its possession for evermore, O God who art love. Amen.

SEVENTH EXERCISE

REPARATION. PREPARATION FOR DEATH

THE soul which has been docile to the instructions of its inspired Teacher has now given free scope to the feelings awakened in it by its manifold relations with God. Emulating the holy angels, it has sung with them the praises of God, and poured forth its love in strains so exalted, that did not some sadder notes tell of the weariness and longing of exile, we might deem it already in possession of the sovereign good.

But after having thus established it in confidence, St. Gertrude will not suffer it to waste its time in dreamy contemplation of a blessedness of which earth can know but the foretaste. This soul which God is drawing to himself has been a sinner; it is so still. Before entering upon the enjoyment of a bliss, the mere hope of which thrills through it with such exquisite gladness, it must appear before the most holy God, and be judged by him. At that awful moment its safety and its perseverance have no sure foundation but humility. Its wise and holy guide will not leave it to itself until she has firmly rooted it in compunction of heart, and in a salutary fear of the judgments of God. She continues, then, to guide it, until she has taught it to use this holy fear as a vantage-ground to advance in love, and to make satisfaction for its past sins.

It is then that she teaches it to seek in the Passion of its Saviour the remedy for all its wounds and the satisfaction for all its offences, and to look henceforward on the dread penalty of death only in the light cast upon it by the death of the Redeemer.

The form in which St. Gertrude has cast this last Exercise will perhaps surprise the reader. To render it in some sort more dramatic, she has impersonated those divine perfections, which act more immediately on man in this life: Mercy, Truth, Peace, Wisdom, Self-oblation, Compassion, and Unchangeableness. She takes the seven canonical hours, which Catholic piety has been wont to associate with the Passion of our Lord, from his Agony in the Garden to his Burial, and she cites the soul, with Love as its advocate and defender, before these seven divine perfections successively. She instructs it how to plead its cause; a cause the soul cannot lose, because it is humble and penitent. This species of drama, in which abstract perfections are treated as living persons, was at that time in great favour in Germany; and indeed it produces a thrilling effect, at the same time that it leads us nearer still to the source of the sublime conceptions and feelings of St. Gertrude.

SEVENTH EXERCISE

Reparation. Preparation for Death

When you feel yourself drawn to devote a day to make reparation and satisfaction for your sins, collect all your thoughts, and give yourself to meditation at each of the seven canonical hours. The essence of this Exercise will consist in your communion with the divine Love. You will appoint it your representative and advocate with the Father of mercies, to appease his anger, and to implore him to vouchsafe to take from the treasure of the Passion of his Son all that is required to pay all your debts, even to your slightest sin of negligence. Thus you will attain a calm and serene confidence in regard of your last hour, inasmuch as you will have every reason to hope that all your sins are fully remitted.

At the hour of Matins you will begin by reciting the first verse of the hymn,[1] Amorem sensus.

AT MATINS

AUTHOR of pardon, deign to extend to us thy tender love; show forth thy loving mercy to us, by cleansing our hearts from all their stains.

Let thy goodness prevail over judgment, and blot out all our sins with thine own effectual pardon. Though I am all unworthy to lift

[1] This hymn is found in various German Breviaries during the Middle Ages.

up my eyes to thee, yet do thou hear my prayer, and satisfy my soul with the vision of thee at the hour of my death, and give me sure hope of eternal rest in thee.

Present yourself now before your heavenly Father, accompanied by Mercy and Love, and begin by addressing the former as follows :

O SWEET Mercy of my God, full of tender pity and compassion, I, a wretched creature, now have recourse to thee in the sorrow and anguish of my heart; for thou art all my hope and all my trust. Never hast thou despised the sorrowful of heart; never hast thou repelled the sinner, how loathsome soever the wounds of his soul; never hast thou cast out him who sought in thee a refuge; never hast thou passed by the poor stricken wounded heart, without having compassion on it. Thou hast always supplied the need of every wretched soul with most maternal kindness. Thou hast ever shown thyself gracious, as thy name imports, to all who implore thine aid. O cast me not away from thee because of my sins, utterly unworthy though I am; cast me not away because of the uselessness in which my life has flowed away.

Despise me not, nor say of me, *Why cumbereth she the ground?* but rather care for me and help me, as becomes thy name and thine essence. I come before thee, poor and utterly destitute of merit, and implore an alms from thee, that I die not in the chill rigours of my

barren life. And truly my hope is that thy munificent hand will bestow on me an alms which shall more than compensate my wasted life. Thou wilt warm beneath the snowy fleece of thy compassion my members, all frozen by reason of my utter nakedness. Thy charity will cover all my sins and satisfy for all my negligences. Open to me thy sure and peaceful abode, that therein I may be sheltered and saved by thy grace. Obtain for me the aid of the tender charity of God, who alone can give health to my soul.

And thou, Love, O Love, look upon my Jesus, thy kingly captive; look upon the diadem of mercy with which he was crowned when thou didst so sternly seize him by the hand of his enemies. Then didst thou seize and appropriate all his possessions, together with his divine person, that thou mightest enrich heaven and earth with his priceless spoils, and satisfy with good things the desire of all that live by means of the treasures of thy glorious prisoner.

With this spoil so costly and so rich, spoil of a captive so renowned and so worthy to be loved, thou canst redeem my lost life, O Love, and give me not sevenfold only, but seventy times sevenfold, the value of my hitherto so useless works. Were the being and the possessions of all men and all angels mine, yet could I not compare with the riches of thy peerless captive; and what is now my worth, being but one poor mortal creature, a vile heap of dust and ashes?

Yet canst thou grant me my petition, O Love, if thou wilt seize me also, and imprison me with my beloved Jesus. Then, sinner as I now am, my contact and my communion with that divine captive would cleanse and sanctify my soul. Then, all useless and unprofitable as I am, should I rise to the dignity of the spiritual man. Then, instead of being the enemy of God, I should become his friend. Cold and tepid as I now am, my soul would thirst ardently for him. Fruitless and barren as I now am, I should be filled with all virtues in their fairest bloom, with all the sanctity of holy religion. Then would the bosom of thy mercy, O my loving Jesus, be my sweet prison-house, and I should be held bound in thy divine heart. Under the victorious sway of thy divine love I should abide thy captive for ever, united inseparably to thee, living for thee alone, and none should take me from thine arms for all eternity. Amen.

AT PRIME

At the hour of Prime you will plead with the divine Truth and with Love. You will beseech them to interpose on your behalf at the judgment-seat, and to propitiate towards you Jesus, who himself will be your judge. And first repeat the second verse of the same hymn, Benigne multum.

O MOST kind and loving Lord, thou knowest that man is fallen, that our flesh is weak, and that we are whelmed and lost in an abyss of misery.

O let thy goodness sweetly prevail, and wash out my sins with thine effectual pardon. Though I am all unworthy to lift up mine eyes to thee, yet do thou hear my prayer, and satisfy my soul with the vision of thee at the hour of my death, and give me sure hope of eternal rest in thee.

O beloved Truth, O calmest equity of my God, how shall I dare appear in thy presence, bowed down as I am beneath the load of my iniquity and the burden of my lost and wasted life, and the crushing weight of all my negligences! I have not been faithful, nor have I traded[1] with the talent thou didst intrust to me, the priceless treasure of Christian faith and the spiritual life. I ought to have committed thy money to the bankers of thy charity, that I might thence draw the abundant interest of perfection, and so give thee back thine own with usury. And not only have I spent thy precious talent, but I have wasted it, squandered it utterly away. I am an evil and a slothful servant; whither shall I go? To whom shall I betake myself, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

O Truth, beside thee on thy throne sit justice and equity; thou judgest all things in number, weight, and measure;[2] all that thou dost examine is weighed in justest, nicest balance. Woe, woe unto me, if, when I come before thee, I had no advocate to plead my cause! O Love, stand thou forth on my behalf, answer for me, sue out my pardon.

[1] St. Matt. xxv. [2] Wisd. xi. 21.

If thou undertake my cause, I know that I still have hope of life.

I know what I will do. I will take the chalice of salvation, even the chalice of my Jesus. I will lay it upon the empty scale of the balance of Truth. So shall I supply all that is lacking, and outweigh all my sins. That chalice will raise up again the ruins of my hope, for therewith I shall infinitely overbalance all my unworthiness.

O Love, lend me awhile my Jesus, thy kingly captive, whose bowels of mercy yearn unceasingly over sinners. This is the hour at which thou didst drag him away before the tribunal of the judge, where all the sins of the whole world were to be charged upon him, and mine above them all, though he was without spot or blemish, nor deserved other reproach than for his love to me. Yes, O Love, O sweetest Love, give me, give me to-day that most innocent and most beloved Jesus, condemned for love of me, for me delivered over to death, that he may go with me to judgment. O entrust him now to me as the hostage of thy faithfulness; for him have I chosen to be my advocate in this my sore strait.

O beloved Truth, I could not, dare not stand before thee without my Jesus; but with him as my companion and advocate I will come with joy and gladness. Sit, then, on thy judgment-seat, O Truth. Lift thy voice, and pronounce on me what sentence shall seem good to thee. For I no longer fear; thy face, so grave and stern, can no longer confound

me; for beside me is he who is all my hope and all my trust. And what sentence canst thou pronounce against me, now that I have with me my true and faithful Jesus, who hath taken on himself all my misery, and pledged himself to obtain from thee a solemn decree of pardon?

O my sweet Jesus, loving pledge and surety for my redemption, come thou with me to judgment; there let us stand together. Judge me, for the right is thine; but remember, thou art also my advocate. In order that I be fully acquitted, thou hast but to recount what thou didst become for love of me, the good thou hast decreed to do unto me, the price wherewith thou hast purchased me. Thou hast taken my nature to this very end, that I might not perish. Thou hast borne the burden of my sins, thou hast died for me, that I might not die an eternal death. Thou hast willed to make me rich in merit, and so hast thou given me all. Judge me, then, at the hour of my death according to that innocence and that purity which thou didst bestow on me in thee when thou didst pay all my debts, when thou wast thyself judged and condemned in my stead; that, all poor and destitute as I am in myself, I might have all and abound.

AT TIERCE

At the hour of Tierce you will place yourself in presence of the divine Peace and of Love, beseeching them to consecrate your understanding and all your feelings to the Lord, that at the hour

of your death you may be found completely reconciled with God. First say the third verse of the same hymn, Causa tibi.

MY whole course is known to thee, to thee who seest my soul without subterfuge or veil; disperse and drive far from me all the illusions of a vain, deceitful world.

Yield, O God, to the impulse of thy goodness, and blot out all my sins with thine own effectual pardon. Though I am all unworthy to lift up my eyes to thee, yet do thou hear my prayer, and satisfy my soul with the vision of thee at the hour of my death, and give me sure hope of eternal rest in thee.

O Peace of God, thou dost pass all understanding; thou art unutterably sweet and fair and full of charms. Wheresoever thou dost penetrate, reign untroubled calm and full security. Thou alone canst stay the wrath of the sovereign Master. Thou dost compass round the throne of the great King, and thy rule is gloriously bright with goodness and with mercy. Come then, and take my cause in hand, the cause of a wretch most guilty and most forlorn. Take me beneath the shelter of thy wings; there shall I be sheltered from the woes I dread by reason of my great and countless negligences.

Already the creditor is at the door, reclaiming from me the trust of life, exacting a return proportioned to the time which has been given me. If I parley with him, I am undone, for I have not wherewithal to pay what I owe. O loving Jesus, thou art my Peace; why dost

thou keep silence? Speak, O speak for me. Say that word of love, *I will ransom her*. Thou art the refuge of the outcast and wretched; thou passest by none without a look of love; never hast thou sent away any that have fled to thee, without first reconciling them with God. O pass not by me, wretched and forlorn, without showing forth thy charity upon me. Appease the wrath of God against me; receive me into the bosom of thy love; give me to drink the pure fresh water of holy hope, that my soul may live. O God of charity, deign now to cool my parched tongue; come and strengthen my soul, which is ready to faint with despair.

O Love, Love, at this hour my Jesus was scourged for me, and crowned with thorns, and treated with contumely and scorn. Yes, at this hour thou didst take Jesus my King, the one only King whom my heart acknowledges, and thou madest him the reproach of men; thou didst make him without form or comeliness, abject and as a leper, so that Judea refused to recognise him for her king, and that I might have him all mine own. Give me, then, that innocent and beloved Jesus, who is mine, who has with such infinite superabundance restored that which he had not taken; give him to me, that he may be the succour and the stay of my soul. Let me place him on my heart; the bitterness of his griefs will bring my soul to life again, and the cruel scourging which thou didst inflict on him, that it might be reckoned to me as my merit, will supply all my defects and pay all my debts.

And thou, O divine Peace, be thou the dear tie which binds me everlastingly to Jesus. Be thou the unshaken pillar which shall make me one heart and one soul with Jesus. Bound to thee, O sweetest Peace, I will endure with joy the scourging and the wounds which Love inflicts on me; and by thee and in thee I shall abide for ever one with my Jesus.

O Peace divine, suffer me to ask of these yet another grace. Vouchsafe to open for me that alabaster vase of love entrusted to thy keeping, the exquisite perfume whereof shall arouse my torpid soul. Vouchsafe to anoint my members with the blood which flows from the head of my Jesus, with the smart of all his sacred limbs. The unutterable fragrance of that most precious blood and smart shall shake from my soul all softness and torpor, even as the earth which lies fast bound and barren beneath the rigours of winter awakes and decks itself with flowers at the sweet breath of spring.

O my sweet Jesus, may the sufferings thou didst endure in all thine adorable limbs be the reparation for all my sins, the satisfaction for all my negligencies. Thou hast poured out thy whole soul for me; grant that I may find all I lack in thee. Amen.

AT SEXT

At the hour of Sext commune with the divine Wisdom and with Love. You will beseech of them to renew you wholly, and to defend you at the hour of your death from all the snares of

the enemy, by the might of the cross of Jesus Christ. Recite the fourth verse of the same hymn, Externi huc.

WE are but strangers and pilgrims here below, and moan forlorn in exile; thou who art our haven and our home, bring us with thee to the abode of life.

Give full scope to thy goodness, O my God, and blot out all my sins with thine own effectual pardon. Though I am all unworthy to lift up my eyes to thee, yet do thou hear my prayer, and satisfy my soul with the vision of thee at the hour of my death, and give me sure hope of eternal rest in thee.

O admirable Wisdom of my God, how mighty and how piercing is thy voice! Thou callest unto thee all that desire and seek thee. Thou makest thy dwelling with the humble, and lovest them that love thee, and judgest the cause of the poor; thy tender mercies are over all thy works, and thou hatest nothing that thou hast made. Thou seemest as though thou sawest not the sins of men, and then with patient mercy awaitest their return to penitence. Open to me too the fount of life; give me to drink the cup of pardon, and teach me what I must do to be well-pleasing in thine eyes all the residue of my days.

O Wisdom, thou bearest in thy right hand the august mark of eternity; all the designs which thou hast formed thou hast brought to pass. Thou alone canst do everything; thou abidest in thyself; and thou renewest all things. O do thou renew me also and sanctify me, that

thou mayest dwell in my soul. Thine it is to make us friends of God; O bestow on me his friendship. Grant that I may desire thee in the night, and watch early unto thee at break of day;[1] and be thou found of me, and do thou possess me wholly, and make me long for thee.

With what prudence dost thou order all thy ways! with what foresight didst thou act when, having decreed to save mankind, thou didst turn to the King of glory! Thou didst then set before him the benefits and blessings of peace; thou didst then dwell on the grandeur and the glory of the prince when he sacrifices himself for love of his people; then didst thou prevail with him to take our burden on himself in love, and to bear our sins in his own body on the tree.[2] Never hath the malice of the devil prevailed to frustrate thy majestic works, O thou resplendent Wisdom of God; neither hath the perverse ignorance of man ever turned aside thy merciful decrees. The greatness of our sins has been powerless against the multitude of thy mercies, the immensity of thy love, the plenitude of thy goodness. Thy kingly might hath swept away every obstacle from before thee, and thou reachest from end to end mightily, and orderest all things sweetly.[3]

O Wisdom, thou art the irresistible might of the divine majesty; deign to triumph over me, thy worthless creature. Consume with the breath of thy mouth, which is the Holy

[1] Isa. xxvi. 9. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 24. [3] Wisd. viii. 1.

Spirit, whatever in me obstructs thy sovereign will. Give me strength to resist all temptations. Bestow upon me that mighty love which will make me die to myself and live alone in thee, and in thee vanquish all mine enemies. Under thy guidance I shall not be wrecked on the quicksands of this life. Thou wilt cover me with thy charity as with a mantle, with thy tenderness as with a garment; and thou wilt seal with me the compact of thine eternal love.

But, O Wisdom, what strange work doest thou? Why dost thou lay thy hand upon my Jesus? Thou despoilest the King of glory; thou makest him a reproach and a scorn. Thou bindest to the wood of shame him who is the ransom of the whole world. In this impenetrable mystery thou weighest and ponderest all, and dost mete out, in number, weight, and measure, the payment of the debt accumulated by the sins of men. Thou raisest from earth and nailest to the cross him who is the life of all that live, that by his death he may draw all men unto himself, and give them new and eternal life.

O Love, how surpassing is thy skill in the means thou hast devised to stay our universal ruin! With what a remedy dost thou heal our ghastly wound! O Love, all the resources of thy skill are lavished upon those who were lost. Thou dost condemn the innocent, that the guilty may be spared. Thou sheddest the blood of the most pure, that thou mayst appease the anger of God, and give us wretched sinners

access to the mercies of the Father whom we have outraged and offended. O Love, thou art skilled to heal our diseases. Thou hast taken upon thee the cause of our peace; thou art unto us the voice and the interpreter of the mercy of our God. By thine own ingenious wisdom thou hast been our help in our extremest need, and thou hast stayed and rolled back the tide of our universal woe with the sweet device of thy goodness. Thou hast found out the ineffable secret of our salvation, and hast made it known unto us who were lost.

But I turn to thee once again, O Wisdom. Is not the hidden treasure of mercy full to overflowing now? O look on me, who stand now in all my wretchedness at the door of thy charity. Deign to fill the mantle of my poverty, wherewith I am covered,[1] with the fulness of thy choicest blessings. I hold forth to thee the empty vessel of my desires; unlock to me all thy treasures. Teach my heart thy unspotted counsels, thy lightsome commandments, thy true judgments.[2] Make me mindful of thy commandments, that I may fulfil them evermore.

O my Jesus, deal not with me according to my sins, neither reward me according to my iniquities. And since thou hast truly reconciled me to God by thy blood, repair by the virtue and power of thy precious cross all the losses of my worthless life.

O Love, thou who dost possess wisdom, come and cover all my iniquities; come and

[1] Ruth iii. 15. [2] Ps. xviii. 8.

supply all my defects and negligences, through the merits of my Jesus, who hath given himself up unto thee, to be dealt with according to thy will.

AT NONE

At the hour of None commune with the divine Self-oblation and with Love, beseeching them to change your whole state and condition from evil to good, and to unite your death to that of the divine Lamb, that under his protection you may escape all perils at the moment of leaving this world. First recite the fifth verse of the same hymn, Dives pauper.

THOU, then, wast rich, yet for our sakes thou didst become poor; for us thou didst suffer on the cross; wash us in the water which flowed forth from thy pierced side, and cleanse us from the stains of our past life.

Let thy goodness prevail over judgment, O Lord, and blot out all my sins with thine effectual pardon. Though I am all unworthy to lift up my eyes to thee, yet do thou hear my prayer; satisfy my soul with the vision of thee at the hour of my death, and give me sure hope of eternal rest in thee.

O Self-oblation of my God, how ravishing is thy beauty! O glowing Love, thou art stronger than death; thou renewest the whole creation; thou art the salvation and the redemption of the world. How sweet are the words which drop from thy lips, and how soothing thy converse! Familiarity with thee brings neither satiety nor weariness, but true unending

joys. Deign, then, to enter into the vile hovel of my heart, and there rest awhile with me. There let me hear thy gentle voice, and I shall no more remember, as I hang on thy lips, my tribulation and my anguish. Be thou my companion all along the way I must go, and then all good things will be mine in thee.

O glorious Self-oblation of my God, behold me, a poor frail child of earth, sore buffeted by the memory of my unfaithfulness as by a furious tempest, my conscience appalled and quaking at the voice of thunder with which my sins cry for vengeance; yet I come to make my refuge under the wings of thy compassion, for well I know that I have no other hope, no other rest, than in thee alone. O receive me even as a mother receives to her bosom the child she had lost. For thine is that impenetrable device for our salvation which bowed in death the head of the Son of the Most High. When thou hadst taken upon thee to come down to the rescue of us thy wretched and resourceless creatures, thou didst not spare the everlasting Son of God. O Charity, O Self-oblation, thou hast so dealt with the holy Son of the Virgin Mother that thou hast rendered him the hope of them to whom nothing was left but black despair. Thy disinterested goodness draws all hearts to trust in thee, nor hast thou ever neglected or disregarded any of the thousands who have come to thee.

O divine Love, I am a poor forsaken creature; open to me a sure refuge in thee, wherein I may lay my heart, torn by thousand fears and

cares. Deign to share with me the sorrows and the weariness of my exile, raise up my drooping soul, soothe the anguish of my tormented heart. Say unto me: *I will never forget thee.* Say but this one word, O Love. Call me to that blessed abode where in thy great mercy thou wilt exchange all my evil for all thy good. It is thou, O Love, O divine Self-oblation, who dost hold my Jesus fastened to the cross, and under thy hand he bows his sacred head and dies for very love.

But what doest thou, O heavenly spirit of Self-oblation? And to whom dost thou turn for aid? Thou knowest no rest till thou hast succoured us in our misery; the love from which thou springest is boundless, everlasting. Thou parchest him with thirst who is the very fount of life. It is not enough for his love to die once for us; he delivers himself to death with an impetuous eagerness, and would die again for every separate sinner. Thus hast thou willed to lavish the most peerless treasure of heaven, that thus thou mightest ransom lost mankind.

And thou, O Love, thou fastenest on the heart of my Jesus, so that in his loving surrender of himself for us, it is all pierced through and torn. O Love, it is enough. Seest thou not that my Jesus nailed to the cross hath given up the ghost? Life has forsaken his most blessed body. He is dead, truly dead, that I might have abundant life. He is dead, that the Father might adopt me as his beloved daughter. He is dead, to open unto me the gates of everlasting life.

O death of Jesus, death most dear, thou art mine inheritance of bliss. O let my soul find its refuge and shelter in thee, O death. For thou bringest forth fruit of life eternal; let me be buried and lost beneath the torrent of life that is ever gushing forth from thee. Thou, O death, art life eternal; beneath thy solemn shadow I dare to hope. O saving death, my soul longs to dwell amidst the good things thou hast purchased for it. O precious death, what wealth hast thou bestowed on me! Absorb all my whole life in thee, and let mine own death be merged and lost in thee.

O mighty death, render mine calm and sure. O death which bringest life, let me dissolve away in thee. O death, bestow on me one feeble spark of that eternal life, and let it burn in me for ever. O glorious and most fruitful death, death on which hangeth all my salvation, thou art the sure covenant of love whereby I have been redeemed, the inviolable pledge of my reconciliation to God. O triumphant death, from thee shines forth a love incomparable in earth or heaven.

O death, thou work of goodness, thou art a source of sweet trust to my heart. O death, which dost lavish on us all thy love, thou containest all things that are good; be thou my guardian, that my own death may be sweetly one with thee. O merciful death, thou art my blessedness, my redemption, and my riches; let my life and death be dissolved in thee.

O death, so full of sweetness, be thou near to aid me when my own death shall come. In

that dread moment compass me round with thy merits. Be for me a sure way, that I fall not into the snare as I step forth from this world. Receive my soul then, and store it up with the goodly treasure thou hast gathered. May my life ebb away in thee, so that in thee I may at length find rest. O may I die in thee, and find in thee sweet and tranquil sleep. Then, O most loving death, thou wilt keep me thine for ever, as thine own possession.

But, O Love, to thee I owe that death of Jesus by which I have obtained salvation. It is thou who hast won for me this rich inheritance, and thy munificent goodness hath bound me to thy service for ever. What shall I render to thee for benefits so manifold and so vast? What praises, what thanksgivings, can I offer worthy of thee? O my redemption, what proportion is there between thee and a miserable creature like me? Wherefore I will offer all my whole soul, my soul which thou hast redeemed, and will give thee all my heart's deepest love. Take possession of my life; gather me wholly up into thee; make me one with thee.

O Love, thy self-oblation, worthy of a God, has opened unto me the door of the most tender heart of my Jesus. O Heart, full of sweetness; O Heart, overflowing with compassion; O Heart, superabounding with love; O Heart, whose gentle mercy droppeth as the dew; O Heart, dearest object of my love, deign to absorb my heart in thee. Thou who art to me more precious than most precious

pearls, call me to the banquet of life. Pour out for me the wine of thy consolations, all unworthy as I am; raise up in thy divine charity the mouldering ruins of my soul, and enrich my utter misery with thy boundless wealth.

O Love, take this divine heart, this censer wherein burneth such fragrant incense, this victim so august; offer it for me upon the golden altar whereon was sealed the reconciliation of man to God; offer it to supply all that has been lacking me day by day throughout the whole course of my barren, wasted life. O Love, plunge my heart into the floods which well forth evermore from that loving heart; bury all mine iniquities and my negligencies in the depths of its divine mercy. Enlighten my understanding, purify my heart by this tomb of Jesus. Detach my heart from all that is carnal and earthly; render it unshackled and unclogged, that when the hour of my death shall come, I may be enabled by thee to lay it without spot or blemish in the hands of my God.

O Heart, beloved above all things, my heart crieth unto thee. O forget me not; let the sweetness of thy charity revive the courage of this guilty, craven heart. And truly there is need that thy choicest mercy interpose for me; for, alas! evil abounds within me, and of good I find no trace. By the merits of thy precious death, O my Jesus, of that death which availed to pay the universal debt, forgive me all that I have done against thee. Restore to me in thee

all that I have forfeited and lost; draw me to thyself with such effectual power that thy love may change my whole being with a word, that I may find favour in thine eyes, and that I may obtain that mercy which thou hast merited for me by dying on the cross for love of me. Grant me, O my Jesus, to love thee in all things and above all things, to cling to thee for ever, and to trust in thee with a boundless trust. Grant me to render to thy death its due homage, by giving me to taste without delay, at the moment of my death, the sweetest fruit of my redemption, the infinite merit of thine own death, with all the efficacy of blessing which thou didst desire for me, when, tormented with thirst for my salvation, thou didst give up the ghost, having redeemed my soul with thy most precious blood.

O Love, may thy farewell be sweet to me at the hour of my death, and my rest in thy peace be full of delights. Amen.

AT VESPERS

Take with you Compassion and Love, and thus present yourself before God, charging them to answer to God at the end of your life for all your debts and all your imperfections. First say the sixth verse of the same hymn, Felix quæ sitit.

THRICE blessed is charity; for she can quench her thirst in thee, O fountain of life. Thrice blessed are the eyes admitted to behold thee face to face.

Show forth now thy great goodness, O my God, and blot out all my sins with thine effectual pardon. Although I am all unworthy to lift up my eyes to thee, yet do thou hear my prayer; satisfy my soul with the vision of thee at the hour of my death, and give me the sure hope of eternal rest in thee.

O divine Compassion, how exquisite is thy sweetness! O munificence of my God, how dear art thou to me! Thou openest thine arms to all; thou art the father of the fatherless, and the refuge of the poor.

What shall I do, O divine Compassion? Whither shall I flee from this intolerable cold? The tepidity of my heart has at length ended in a frost in which all the furrows of my soul lie bound. O let me find a shelter near to thee; there shall I recover from the confusion of my soul's nakedness; beneath thy wings I shall find warmth and life; under their shadow I shall hope for ever.

O Compassion of my God, forsake me not in my desolation and anguish; turn not thy face away from my cries and groans. Listen to my prayer in thy yearning love. Open to me thy bosom, that I may rest therein awhile, and pour out all my soul to thee. I know beforehand that thou wilt receive me kindly, for thou never despisest those who are desolate, afflicted, and tried. O how lovingly dost thou welcome those who suffer! How sweet are thy perfumes to the sick and fainting soul!

Thou raisest up those who are bruised in their fall; thou settest free them that are bound.

Thou despisest none who suffer tribulation; in thy maternal love thou dost soothe all their pangs and sorrows. Those who are driven nigh unto despair call forth thy most tender cares, and thou relievest every misery and woe. O lend thine ear unto the voice of my indigence; suffer me to commune with thee, and to drink in thy dear and precious counsels.

My sins affright me, my omissions cover me with shame; my life is one long failure, and fills me with alarm. I dread that most strict account which Jesus, the great and mighty man of the parable,[1] will exact from me. For if he require the talent he intrusted to me, the precious days of my life; and if he demand the produce of the great gift of understanding wherewith he has ennobled me, I know not what I shall answer; I shall stand speechless; I shall have no word to reply which will be worthy of his infinite and most indulgent love.

What shall I do? whither shall I turn? I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. O divine Compassion, let me hear thy voice; give me, I implore thee, some good counsel full of sweetness, which may revive my soul. Tell me what I must do in this my great strait. Thy name expresses the goodness from which thou springest, and thou knowest what is best for me to do. Forgive me, come to my help; be not unto me as a stranger in this my tribulation. Let thine heart be touched at my poverty and my wretchedness; take pity on

[1] St. Luke xvi. 2.

me, and say unto me, All my treasures are thine.

O divine Compassion, hast thou not at thy disposal wealth so boundless and so precious that heaven and earth cannot contain them? It is thou who didst constrain my Jesus to give his soul for mine, his life for mine; and that because thou didst will that all thine should be mine, and to pour out all thine abundance into the lap of my poverty. O vouchsafe to bid my hungry soul partake of thy substance; bid me live of thy riches. Care thou for me, feed my soul; and I shall no longer fear to faint and come short in the service of my Lord. Under thy protection I will calmly await the moment when I shall return to my God, and give back my spirit to him who gave it. O Compassion, O goodness, O sweet munificence of my God, thou hast at thy disposal a treasure whose magnificence calls forth the adoring wonder of heaven and earth, peerless and incomparable. Day by day dost thou offer unto God the Father upon the altar a sacrifice, a burnt-offering, a sweet incense of merit ineffable, and dost blot out all my sins and debts. Thou dost offer to the Father his own Son, the object of his eternal love and complacency; and by this offering thou dost turn away his anger and reconcile him to me.

Come then, do thou now renew my life by the application of this divine mystery, so mighty to supply all my imperfections and repair all my faults. Deign to give me back a hundredfold all that I have lost, that my

soul may sing for joy in thee. Do thou renew my youth in thee like the eagle's, and may my life henceforth be consecrated to thee; let all my powers with all their energy be expended in thy service, and my whole being glorify thee.

O Jesus, blot out all mine iniquities in thy great compassion; cover all my sins with the mantle of thy charity; supply all my defects in thy goodness; let my soul recover, through thy love, that liberty which thou gavest me at the cost of thine own most precious blood, when thou, the innocent and the spotless one, didst deign to die for me. Conform me in all things to thy will; transform my whole life in thee. Make me altogether such as thou wouldst have me to be; so that when I quit this life, the cloud of my body may part, and give me to behold with rapture thy face of love.

AT COMPLINE

At Compline your communing will be with Perseverance and with Love. Pray that you may exchange your own miserable life for the most worthy life of Jesus, so that at the hour of your death he may find you perfect and complete in holiness and in the requirements of the religious life. First recite the seventh verse of the same hymn, Grandis est tibi.

THY glory, O my Lord, is infinite; thy dazzling splendours call forth the praises of all those whose heart hath taken its flight towards thee.

O let thy goodness consummate its perfect work, and blot out all my sins with thine effectual pardon. Though I am all unworthy to lift up my eyes to thee, yet do thou hear my prayer; satisfy my soul with the vision of thee at the hour of my death, and give me sure hope of eternal rest in thee.

O most patient and persevering charity of my Lord Jesus, who hath loved us even unto death, thou alone dost wear the crown; to thee the victory is due, to thee the triumph and the loud acclaim. Thy thoughtful foresight and thine unsleeping care are a homage to the King of kings, which fills all heaven with adoring wonder.

O Perseverance of the soul in charity, what ineffable sweetness, what ravishing melody hath thy voice! How beauteous and how charming is thy fairest face! Thou canst gather even in the wilderness choicest fruit, and compel it to give forth the sweet and manifold fragrance of virtue. The God of heaven looketh on thy face with complacency; he hath desired thy beauty, and himself hath sung thy praise. His look is to thee unfailing strength; in thee he taketh his rest as in his bridal chamber, and none troubleth his repose. O help me, then, from the morning watches, thou who art the soul's true noon; keep my soul in thee, and dispel all cloud and mist which might bewilder or mislead it.

O Perseverance in charity, thou art the perfection of all virtues, and the soul's true health. The heaviest burdens thou dost

render light, and the toil of virtue becometh sweetly refreshing when thou hast once formed and strengthened it into habit. Thou perfect Love of God, in thee dwelleth all sweetness and all suavity. Thou art the true peace, the calm security which none can ever trouble. Thou art the crown and the consummation of all good, the perfect fulfilment of the divine commandments. Thou art the high Sabbath of all sabbaths; for in thee doth the divine wisdom rest, and the divine love complete its work.

O Perseverance in charity, thou hast perfected and completed the mission which his loving compassion had constrained my Jesus to undertake. Thou hast finished the work of our redemption, and called to the blessedness of adoption them that were lost. Through thee my Jesus ended all his agony, and slept at length in peace; in thee he resteth now from his mighty work; under thy shadow doth he sweetly slumber; beneath thy seal he slept the loving sleep of the tomb.

O persevering Love, with what unslumbering care dost thou watch in his sepulchre him who is my soul's priceless price, dearer than gold and more precious than the topaz; who alone can repair all my omissions and defects and heal all my imperfections. Take my poor heart and hide it there, where thou dost watch over my choicest treasure, that my heart may dwell wholly in the cleft of the rock where my beloved resteth.

O living Charity, O undaunted Perseverance of my Lord Jesus, from the very depth of my

heart do I cry unto thee; be thou my representative and my advocate. Speak thou in my behalf, that my Jesus, my King and my God, who hath finished the work which the Father gave him to do, may grant me, vile worm of earth as I am, a pure heart, a firm unwavering will, to serve him diligently and faithfully unto the end, and perseverance to bear the yoke of his commandments. Then, O mighty Love, wilt thou be my hundredfold reward in this life, and after death my glorious recompense; for the fulness of my joy is in thee alone.

Vouchsafe me a tender compunction of heart, a spirit of so humble penitence, that I may be ever striving to render my sins fewer, the defects and imperfections of my works less glaring. Then shall I receive, as the reward of my perseverance, that blessed crumb which falleth from the Master's table, the full unclouded view of the face of my Jesus; then shall my soul be satisfied with everlasting gladness, when the glory of my Jesus appeareth.

O Love, thou art constant, strong, invincible; teach me constancy in loving Jesus, and unfaltering perseverance in serving him. O grant that I may be awake and ready when the Master cometh, whether in the first or the second watch.[1] Keep me from slumber and from drowsiness when the great cry shall be heard at midnight; through thy care, escorted by thee, may I enter in to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Fill my lamp with the oil of charity; light it at the flame of love; may it

[1] St. Luke xii. 31.

give a bright and unwavering light in all the works of a living faith; and bring me to the sweet delights of everlasting life.

O my sweetest Jesus, my most beloved Spouse, come, arouse in thee my sluggish soul. By thy death give me back that life which is for thee alone. Stablish and confirm me in a life worthy of the precious blood wherewith thou hast redeemed me. Give me a mind which may discern thy sweetness, a heart which may feel thee, a soul which may understand all thy will, a virtue which may fulfil all thy good pleasure, and a firm unshaken perseverance to the end. At the hour of my death do thou open to me without delay the door of thy most loving heart, and grant that nothing in me may retard or obstruct my entrance into the secret sanctuary of thy love, where I shall enjoy thee and possess thee evermore mine own, thou true joy of my heart. Amen.

The same day on which you thus make reparation for your sins, you will beseech our Lord, at noon, to admit you to the shady garden of his divine heart. There you will, like Naaman, wash seven times in Jordan—that is to say, in the merits of the life and Passion of Jesus—that you may thus be cleansed from every stain, and be all fair and without spot at the hour of your death, and be introduced to the sanctuary of his love.

O JESUS, thou who comest from the land of angels, my life and my salvation, thou art all majestic in thy beauty; but, alas, my

soul, that work of thy hands which thou lovest, is plunged in blindness and thick darkness. Deign, then, to be my healing and my light, O my beloved. Wash out all the stains of my sinful eyes with the purifying tears thy beauteous eyes have shed; so that at my last hour I may clearly behold with the purged eye of my soul thy beloved countenance in the light of the most holy Trinity. Thou art the one desire of my heart; O plunge me soon into the abyss of thy delights.

O Jesus, my beloved hope, my true and most merciful Spouse, who never despisest the sighings of the wretched, mine ears are sealed in deafness through my own most grievous fault. O thou source of mercy, open mine ears to hear thee, that my whole life henceforward may be spent in obeying thee. O my well-beloved, by the tender compassion that renders thy most blessed ears attentive to our cry, cleanse away all the iniquities of my sinful ears, that at the hour of my death I may not fear to hear an adverse sentence; but when thy sweetest voice shall echo through the heavens to call me unto thee, may my hearing be a gladness and a bliss. For thee alone doth my soul wait; O take me quickly home and unite me to thyself, thou unfading charm of my soul, thou one only love of my heart. Thou whose countenance is so fair and thy heart so tender, why is my soul exiled far from thee?

O God of my heart, distractions rule and sway my heart; deign to collect it and fix it

on thee. O my well-beloved, by the purity of intention that ever reigned over thy most holy thoughts, by the glowing love of thy pierced heart, cleanse thou all the perverse thoughts of my guilty heart. Let thy bitter Passion be my soft shade at the hour of my death, and thy heart which love hath broken be my everlasting habitation. O thou one only love of my heart, I love thee far above all thy creatures; let me not linger far from thee.

O Jesus, only Son of our heavenly Father, our most merciful Master, who never leavest in their desolation the sons thou hast adopted; I have sinned against thee exceedingly with my tongue; O let my mouth be filled with thy praise, for thou art my glory and my joy. By the power and the life which dwell in the sweet words of thine ever-blessed mouth, blot out, O my well-beloved, all the sins of my polluted mouth. Bestow on me the kiss of thy peace; so shall I pass with joy from this life to the life that is to come; for the kiss of thy mouth alone can soothe and console my heart. O thou my fairest love, pierce my heart with thine arrows, so that I may fall, wounded unto death, into the abyss of love of which thou art the source. O Jesus, who dost all things so wisely and so well, who hast devised means to repair in such magnificence the work of thy hands which I have defaced and destroyed, I see, alas, that my works are nothing but imperfection, in nothing conformed to thy law. O thou, my only refuge and my strength, come quickly to sanctify all my works in me, and

grant me the aid and co-operation of thy life-giving love.

O thou my well-beloved, by the perfection which thou didst stamp upon all thy works, by thy sacred hands nailed to the cross, I implore thee to forgive all the sins of my guilty hands, that at the hour of my death I may be able to cast myself without delay into thy loving embrace. Thou art my true Spouse chosen amongst ten thousand; acknowledge me then for thine own, not for my merit, but of thine own essential goodness. O Jesus, thou who art ever in the bloom of thy youth, whose beauty surpasseth all, and whose converse doth ravish and exalt the soul, I have wandered from the narrow way. O do thou, my beloved guide, direct all my steps according unto thine own good pleasure.

O my well-beloved, by the weariness thy sacred feet endured on earth, and by the wound of the nails wherewith they were pierced on the cross, blot out all the sins of my guilty feet. O thou faithful protector of my pilgrimage, sustain my tottering steps, that I may come with joy into thy wondrous tabernacle, into the house of my God. Thou art the one prize for which I have run my race; give me an ever-active love, so that my feet may never stumble nor halt, but that I may renew my strength, and press forward unwearyingly along that way, of which thou art the glorious end. O Jesus, O great God, full of sweetness and of goodness, the gifts thou dost lavish on me are infinite as thyself. O living God, thy

glowing love has a sweet attractive force which draws to thy bosom all that thine almighty hand hath made. Alas, my whole life was wasted and gone, withered and buried in death. Revive it in thyself, O God of my life. O make it bloom again, and bring forth fruit worthy of thee.

O my well-beloved, by the majestic innocence of thine own life, by its holiness and purity, wash out all the defilements of my polluted life. Let my life be no more in me; draw it wholly up into thee, so that at the hour of my death I may be established in thee, O my true life. Thou art my one transcending good, the one beloved refuge of my soul. O give me to languish with love of thee, to die with longing to behold thy face, to praise thee in transports of eternal gladness, and to consume away for evermore in the glowing fires of thy love. Amen.

When evening has come, you will gather with your Beloved a garland of flowers, beseeching him to give you his blessing, and to crown you with all virtues as with a wreath.

O MY beloved Jesus, let thy soul bless me this day. May thy sovereign Godhead bless me; may thine all-perfect manhood bless me; may thy kingly munificence leave on me such evident tokens of thy benediction that I may feel myself all transformed by an unconquerable love, and cleave inseparably unto thee. Make me perfect in thy love.

Make me well-pleasing in thy sight, in humbleness of mind, in fraternal charity, in chaste simplicity, in finished modesty, in purity of heart, in constant watchfulness over my senses, in holiness of life, in prompt obedience, in sweet unwearied patience, in exact obedience to my spiritual rule, in voluntary poverty, in holy meekness, in the prudent thoughtfulness of all my actions in joy of heart, in whole and perfect truth, in an upright conscience, in holy perseverance, in constancy of faith, in firmness of hope, in fulness of charity, in all the blessed crown and consummation of thy love in me. Change the thorny thicket of my heart into a paradise of virtues, a garden filled with all perfections, a field which the Lord hath blessed,[1] fruitful of peace, of piety. and of holiness.

O my beloved Jesus, do thou be with me always, so that my heart may ever dwell with thee and abide in thee; and may the blessed tie of thy love remain unbroken and unweakened in me evermore. Vouchsafe to bless me in the moment when I shall go hence, that my soul, disenthralled from the flesh, may flee away and be at rest in thee. Amen.

[1] Gen. xxvi i. 27.

The following exquisite Hymn, together with the Antiphon and Prayer, are taken from the office of St. Gertrude in the Breviary of the Order of St. Benedict.

HYMNUS

GERTRUDIS, arca Numinis,
Sponsoque juncta virginum,
Da nuptialis pangere
Castos amores fœderis.

Quadrima Christo nubilis
In claustra prompte convolas;
Spretoque nutricis sinu,
Sponsi requiris oscula.

Candentis instar lilii
Odore mulces sidera;
Et virginali cœlitum
Regem decore pertrahis.

Qui vivit in sinu Patris
Cinctus perenni gloria,
Amanter, ut sponsus, tua
Recumbit inter ubera.

Amore Christum vulneras;
Hic te vicissim vulnerat,
Tuoque cordi propria
Inurit alte stigmata.

O singularis charitas,
O mira commutatio;
Hic corde respirat tuo:
Tu vivis hujus spiritu.

Te, sponse Jesu, virginum
Beata laudent agmina;
Patri, simul Paraclito,
Par sit per ævum gloria. Amen.

HYMN

O GERTRUDE, shrine of the Divinity, united to the Spouse of virgins; grant us to celebrate the chaste love of thy espousals.

Scarcely hadst thou completed thy fourth year when thou wast espoused to Christ, and didst flee to the shelter of the cloister. Thou didst put from thee the breast of thy nurse, and seek the divine kiss of thy Spouse.

Like a fair spotless lily thou dost give forth a perfume which gladdens heaven; and the splendour of thy virgin beauty draweth to thee the King of Saints.

He who dwelleth in the bosom of the Father, surrounded with everlasting glory, deigns to take his repose in thy love.

Thou woundest Jesus with love; and he woundeth thee in return, and deeply graveth on thy heart the marks of his sacred Passion.

O peerless love, O wondrous interchange; he it is who breatheth in thy heart, and thy life hangeth on the breath of his mouth.

Let the blessed choirs of virgins sing thy praise, O Jesus, Spouse of virgins; and equal glory be ascribed to Father and to Paraclete. Amen.

ANTIPHON

O DIGNISSIMA Christi sponsa, quam lux prophetiæ illustravit, zelus apostolicus inflammavit, laurea virginum coronavit, divini amoris incendium consummavit.

ORATIO

DEUS, qui in purissimo corde beatæ Gertrudis virginis tuæ jucundam tibi habitationem præparasti; ejus meritis et intercessione cordis nostri maculas clementer absterge; ut digna divinæ majestatis tuæ habitatio effici mereatur. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

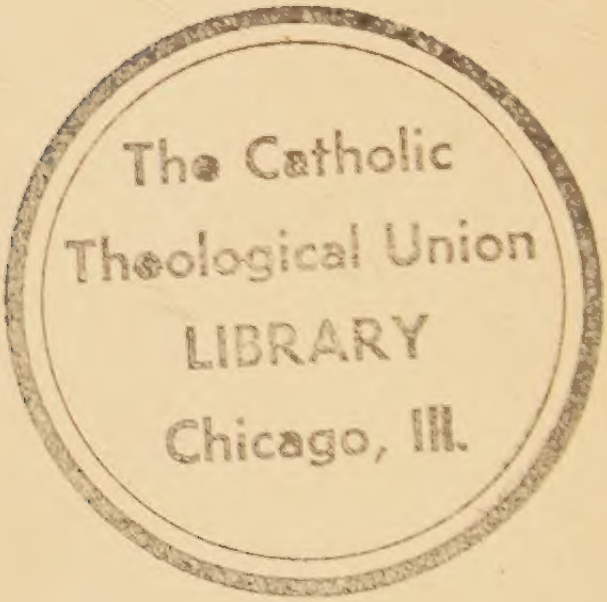
ANTIPHON

O MOST worthy spouse of Christ, on whom the prophetic light hath shone, whose heart an apostolic zeal inflamed, whose head the wreath of virgins hath crowned, whom the glowing fire of divine love consumed.

PRAYER

O GOD, who hast prepared for thyself a dwelling-place of delights in the most pure heart of the blessed virgin Gertrude; deign, we beseech thee, through her merits and intercession, to wipe away all stains from our hearts, that they may become meet abodes of thy divine majesty. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

29,179
CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL UNION
BV5080.G47 C001
THE EXERCISES OF SAINT GERTRUDE, VIRGIN
3 0311 00037 9573



3 0311 00037 9573

CO-CCL-936